



Into the Storm: American Covert Involvement in the Angolan Civil War, 1974-1975

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INTO THE STORM: AMERICAN COVERT INVOLVEMENT IN THE ANGOLAN
CIVIL WAR, 1974-1975

by

Shannon Rae Butler

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ABSTRACT

Angola's civil war in the mid-1970s has an important role to play in the ongoing debate within the diplomatic history community over how best to explain American foreign policy. As such, this dissertation uses the Angolan crisis as a case study to investigate and unravel the reasons for the American covert intervention on behalf of two pro-Western liberation movements: the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), led by Holden Roberto, and Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. That Angola is a late 20th century example of foreign intervention is not disputed. However, the more significant and difficult questions surrounding this Cold War episode, which are still debated and which directly relate to the purpose of this study, are first, "Why did the United States involve itself in Angola when it had previously ignored Portugal's African colonies, preferring to side with its NATO partner and to maintain its distance from Angola's national liberation movements?" Was it really, as the Ford Administration asserted, a case of the United States belatedly responding to Soviet expansionism and Kremlin-supported aggression by Agostinho Neto's leftist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Secondly, "Exactly when did the United States intervene, and was this intervention largely responsible for the ensuing escalation of violence and external involvement in Angola affairs?" In other words, as suggested by the House Select Committee on

Intelligence, was the Soviet Union's intervention in response to the American decision to allocate \$300,000 to Holden Roberto's National Front in January 1975? If so, then contrary to the Ford Administration's official account of the crisis, the United States – and not the Soviet Union – was the initial provocateur in the conflict that left the resource-rich West African nation in a ruinous, perpetual state of warfare into the early 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

EXPLAINING AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY: DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

“The Soviet Union’s massive and unprecedented intervention in the internal affairs of Africa...are a matter of urgent concern.”

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger¹

“The Soviets did not make the first move in Angola. Other people did. The Chinese and the United States. The Soviets have been a half-step behind, countering our moves.”

Anonymous CIA Official²

“Subsequent to President Mobutu’s request last winter to Dr. Kissinger...the Forty Committee approved furnishing Roberto \$300,000 for various political action activities.”

The Pike Committee³

This study will attempt to explain the American intervention in the Angolan crisis and civil war of the mid-1970s on behalf of two pro-Western liberation movements: the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), led by Holden Roberto, and Jonas

¹ Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *U.S. Involvement in Civil War in Angola: Hearing before the Subcommittee on African Affairs*, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., January 29, 1976, 6. Hereafter referred to as *Angola*.

² Former CIA agent John Stockwell identified the anonymous official as Brenda MacElhinney. She was the CIA desk officer for Angola when he returned to CIA headquarters in late July 1975 to become the head of the task force that oversaw the covert American involvement in Angola (code name IAFEATURE). “Brenda MacElhinney” is a pseudonym. John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978), 62.

³ “The CIA Report the President Doesn’t Want to Read,” *The Village Voice*, February 16, 1976, 85. In 1975, the House Select Committee on Intelligence, chaired by Representative Otis Pike (D-NY), conducted hearings on the American intelligence community, which ran parallel to the Church Committee hearings on the same subject in the Senate. The Ford Administration blocked public disclosure of the House committee’s findings. Newsman Daniel Schorr of CBS, however, managed to obtain a copy of the official report. It was subsequently published in *The Village Voice*. Holden Roberto of the FNLA had lived nearly his entire life in Zaire and had received most of his support from the Zairian president, Sese Seko Mobutu. He was also related, by marriage, to Mobutu.

Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).⁴ As David Gibbs has observed, foreign intervention – broadly defined as “the manipulation of internal politics of one country by another” – has been practiced since at least ancient Greece. In the Cold War era, however, it became more common and important.⁵ This occurred because the possession of nuclear weapons, especially by the United States and Soviet Union, made direct confrontation between the two increasingly dangerous. As a consequence, the global adversarial competition between the two nations was often displaced to indirect confrontation in the Third World, usually either through the use of surrogates or through paramilitary, and often, covert operations.

Angola is a late 20th century example of foreign intervention. That simple fact is not disputed. However, the more significant and difficult questions of this Cold War episode, which are still debated and which directly relate to the purpose of this study, are first,

⁴ The United States supported both the FNLA and UNITA, viewing them either as pro-West, or at least as anti-Communist. By November 1975, this support amounted to at least \$32 million dollars. The Soviet Union and Cuba were the primary supporters of Agostinho Neto's Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) during the civil war phase of the Angolan crisis. Yugoslavia also gave significant assistance to the Popular Movement. China was a patron of the FNLA and to a lesser extent, UNITA, as were Zaire and the Republic of South Africa. During 1975-1976, Zambia primarily supported Jonas Savimbi's UNITA, although it had provided limited support to all three liberation movements during their struggle against the Portuguese by allowing them sanctuaries inside its territory. However, by early 1975, Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's president, had distanced himself from the Marxist Neto, perhaps because of his espoused Christian belief. France, Great Britain, West Germany and Belgium also tossed their hats into the interventionist ring at different points during the Angolan conflict, although France's involvement was greater than that of the other three West European nations. Thus, a complicated and violent internal situation in Angola, brought on by fourteen years of insurgency as well as internecine fighting among the three liberation movements, became regionalized and internationalized.

⁵ David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 1.

“Why did the United States involve itself in Angola when it had previously ignored Portugal’s African colonies, preferring to side with its NATO partner and to maintain its distance from Angola’s three national liberation movements?” Was it really, as the Ford Administration asserted, a case of the United States belatedly responding to Soviet expansionism and Kremlin-supported aggression by Agostinho Neto’s leftist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)?

Secondly, “Exactly when did the United States intervene, and was this intervention largely responsible for the ensuing escalation of violence and external involvement in Angolan affairs?” In other words, as suggested by the House Select Committee on Intelligence (the Pike Committee), was the Soviet Union’s intervention in reaction to the Forty Committee’s January 1975 allocation of \$300,000 to Holden Roberto’s National Front?⁶ If so, then the United States - and not the Soviet Union - was the initial

⁶ The president’s National Security Advisor, in this case, Henry Kissinger, chaired the Forty Committee. Its membership included the Director of Central Intelligence, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Attorney General as principal participants. The Forty Committee was named for the National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM 40) that established the organization as the successor to the 303 Committee, whose name and existence had been leaked to the media. On February 16, 1970, in a memorandum to President Nixon, Kissinger recommended that he sign the new directive, as attached. The memorandum read, in part, “This directive is a new statement of policy affirming the necessity for the continuation of covert action operations in a supplemental role to the overt foreign activities of the U.S. Government in its defense and in its efforts for world peace.” “Memorandum for the President, Subject: Responsibility for the Conduct, Supervision and Coordination of Covert Action Operations,” February 16, 1970, National Security Decision Memoranda, Box H-145, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD. William Corson, who has extensively studied and written on the American intelligence organization, explains the importance of the establishment of the Forty Committee. “NSDM 40’s significance was twofold: it delegated back to the DCI (then Richard Helms) from the secretary of state (William Rogers) coordinating authority and responsibilities for covert action

provocateur in the conflict that left the resource-rich West African nation in a ruinous, perpetual state of warfare into the early 21st century.⁷

Explaining American Foreign Policy: Traditionalism and the Cold War

The questions raised above, of course, go to the heart of the historical debate among diplomatic historians over the conduct of American foreign policy during the Cold War era. In its most fundamental form, that debate often revolved around the issue of which nation, the United States or the Soviet Union, was primarily responsible not only for the onset of the Cold War, but importantly as it relates to this study, for its expansion to the periphery.

Early on, the majority of diplomatic historians, in what became known as the Traditionalist or Orthodox perspective, contended that the Soviet Union was largely to

proposals, and it declared that covert action was to be employed to facilitate American Foreign policy objectives rather than simply to counter the threat of international communism.” William R. Corson, *The Rise of the American Intelligence Empire* (New York: The Dial Press/James Wade Books, 1977), 412-413. The purpose, if not the effect, of NSDM 40 was to give more control over the intelligence community to the president and his national security advisor.

⁷ British political scientist George Wright has chronicled the systematic devastation of Angola through the years of guerrilla warfare prior to its independence, the succeeding civil war, and the continuation of guerrilla warfare by Savimbi’s UNITA after independence, supported by the United States and South Africa. George Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation: United States’ Policy toward Angola since 1945* (Chicago: Pluto Press, 1997). American author and free-lance journalist, Karl Maier, details the human tragedy in *Angola: Promises and Lies* (Rivonia, UK: William Waterman Publications, 1996). Government forces killed Jonas Savimbi in February 2002. It has only been since his death that the Angolan government has had the opportunity, however daunting, to unify and rebuild the devastated nation. As noted in one of the many obituaries on Savimbi, “By the end of the 1980s, his army, supplied and funded by the CIA and aided by numerous South African invasions, had laid waste much of Angola. Swathes of the countryside were cut off from agriculture by minefields, mine victims and malnourished children swamped the hospitals and tens of thousands were also kidnapped by UNITA troops.” “Jonas Savimbi: Angolan Leader who Continued to Wage Pointless Guerrilla War,” *Irish Times*, March 9, 2002, 16.

blame for the Cold War. They assumed that the United States, because of its democratic institutions and values, was largely benevolent, peaceful, and defensive in nature, and that its foreign policy reflected these characteristics. Conversely, the Marxist-Leninist ideology amplified the inherently aggressive nature of the Soviet Union - the successor to imperial Russia - driving its expansionist ambitions.

Based upon these core assumptions, Traditionalists argued that in the aftermath of World War II, as large areas of the world, but especially Western Europe at first, lay vulnerable to Soviet aggression, the United States, still tied to its historical isolationist tendencies, only reluctantly responded to the Communist threat to freedom and democracy. In general, then, Traditionalists emphasize that external factors – in this case the threat posed by the Soviet Union and Communism, in general – have been the primary determinants of American foreign policy behavior.

The assumptions and arguments of Traditionalism most often reflected the attitudes and sentiments of the White House and the official Washington foreign policy establishment. Moreover, the origins and evolution of the Traditionalist perspective paralleled the development of the American Cold War political culture. Thus, in 1967, historian Arthur M. Schlesinger could write, apparently with conviction, that “The Cold War was the brave and essential response of free men to communist aggression,” and that “So long as the Soviet Union remained a messianic state, ideology compelled a steady

expansion of communist power.”⁸ In this sentiment, he echoed the earlier thoughts of the first Cold War president, Harry S. Truman, whose arguments for American assistance to Turkey and Greece set the tone and provided the direction for the early Traditionalists. Concerned that both nations would succumb to Communist insurgencies, President Truman announced in March 1947:

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority...the second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression...I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure.⁹

As mentioned, the disagreements between Traditionalists and Revisionists also concern which nation, the United States or the Soviet Union, was the most responsible for extending Cold War hostilities into the Third World, obviously a dispute that bears directly upon the purposes of this study. Traditionalists argue that the Soviet Union was the main provocateur in this dynamic of the Cold War. They base their assessment, as orthodox historian Douglas Macdonald tells us, upon the assumption that early in the

⁸ Arthur M. Schlesinger, “The Origins of the Cold War,” *Foreign Affairs* 46, no. 1 (October 1967): 47. The author admits that in the post-World War II environment, Moscow could have perceived some American policies, the Marshall Plan and NATO, for example, as threatening to its own security. Still, he concluded that Stalin and his associates were so consumed by Communist ideology and authoritarianism, and Stalin by “his paranoid moments,” that Soviet expansionism was inevitable. *Ibid.*

⁹ Harry S. Truman, “The Truman Doctrine,” in *American Defense Policy*, 4th ed., eds. John E. Endicott and Roy W. Stafford, Jr. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 61.

Cold War the Soviet Union directed a worldwide, united Communist bloc that was “driven to expand its sphere of influence by the shared totalist ideological tenets of Marxism-Leninism, largely as defined by Moscow.”¹⁰ Josef Stalin, then, conspired with like-minded leaders in the Third World, such as North Korea’s Kim Il Sung, in a Kremlin-engineered plan to impose Communist hegemony upon others. Their task was made easier by the lack of any coherent American security policy in the Asian periphery.

Explaining American Foreign Policy: Revisionism and the Cold War

By the mid-1960s, an emergent grouping of diplomatic historians, often collectively termed “the New Left,” or “Revisionists,” challenged the traditionalist interpretation. Crystallized by the ongoing war in Vietnam, these historians openly questioned fundamental orthodox assumptions about the benign and well-intentioned nature of American diplomacy.¹¹ Unlike the Traditionalist emphasis on external factors, Revisionists have stressed domestic economic determinants as being primarily responsible for the basic character and motivations of American foreign policy.

Based on this assumption, they argue that the United States has historically been expansionist in pursuit of open global markets, which were needed to sustain and grow

¹⁰ Douglas Macdonald, “Communist Bloc Expansion in the Early Cold War: Challenging Realism, Refuting Revisionism,” *International Security*, 20, no. 3 (Winter 1994/1995), 179.

¹¹ Peter Novick has chronicled the emergence and evolution of traditionalism, revisionism and post-revisionism in *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge Press, 1988), especially Chapter 13, “The Collapse of Comity,” 415-468.

American liberal capitalism. American economic hegemony was both an end goal and an enabling objective: it benefited continued capitalistic expansion and the American economy, while at the same time it enhanced the nation's geostrategic power and global leverage.

With a preponderance of power in the aftermath of the Second World War, these related goals seemingly became attainable. The major obstacles were the Soviet Union and, in the periphery, the growth of generally anti-capitalistic, indigenous liberation movements. Consequently, American unilateral actions following the war's end, designed to restructure a world order that would sustain the United States' wartime prosperity, left little or no room for serious consideration of either Soviet security concerns or Third World nationalistic aspiration. Further, in pursuit of global hegemony, American decision makers portrayed the Soviet Union, and Marxism-Leninism in general, as "on the march." They justified the commitment of enormous material and human resources in terms of defending democracy and freedom against this Communist onslaught. Consequently, it was primarily American actions that issued in the Cold War era.

The Revisionist position on the question of the Cold War's expansion to the periphery flows logically from their assumptions about the nature and purposes of American foreign policy. Economic dominance, and the geopolitical power that came with it,

required that the United States attain and maintain unfettered access to foreign markets. Political instability and social upheaval in the Third World, largely the result of growing nationalism, posed a threat to American hegemony, with serious implications for the nation's national security interests and its role in the world. Consequently, the United States has largely been an anti-revolutionary and interventionist power. It has used all available resources to counter disruptions to the status quo in the periphery, including diplomacy, covert and paramilitary activities, war-by-proxy, and finally overt American military intervention.

Explaining American Foreign Policy: Credibility

Most Revisionist historiography, as discussed, has emphasized the domestic economic imperatives of America's geopolitical strategies. However, as observed by historian Thomas J. McCormick, even the most well-known Revisionist historian, William Appleman Williams, was "never a narrow economic determinist."¹² While still arguing that American foreign policy has been imperialistic and that the Cold War was much more complex than the Traditionalist perspective would have us believe, the Revisionist perspective also encompasses less tangible, but still internal determinants, to explain

¹² Thomas McCormick, "What Would William Appleman Williams Say Now?" *Passport* 38, no. 2 (August 2007): 17. McCormick opined that if Williams were alive today, his assessment of current American foreign policy, most notably the war in Iraq, would have highlighted the importance of oil, "partly because of the economic value of the oil itself, but more largely because of the geopolitical clout over others made possible by the control of oil." Ibid.

American external behavior. Anders Stevenson and other historians, for example, have stressed the historical significance of ideology, especially that of American exceptionalism, in the making of foreign policy. Still others, most notably McCormick, have emphasized the importance that American Cold War leaders assigned to the notion of credibility as it relates to global leadership and the exercise of power.¹³

As analyzed by historian Robert J. McMahon, maintaining credibility has been one of the key determinants of American global behavior in the nuclear age, even in situations of only marginal importance to the American national interest. As a result of what he refers to as the American fixation or preoccupation with credibility, “small issues will often loom large, not because of their intrinsic importance, but because they are taken as tests of resolve.”¹⁴ Moreover, credibility has a double significance, because “Just as threats need to be credible to deter potential aggressors, so too must promises be credible to reassure friends.”¹⁵

¹³ Anders Stevenson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right, 1600-1990* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995). On ideology and American foreign policy, see also N. Gordon Levin, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution (1917-1919)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968). Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War and After*, 2d ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1995).

¹⁴ Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, 1989), 39, cited in Robert J. McMahon, “Credibility and World Power: Exploring the Psychological Dimension in Postwar American Diplomacy,” *Diplomatic History* 15, no. 4 (Fall 1991): 457.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 455.

The concept of credibility is not the exclusive purview of the Revisionist perspective. As McMahon has observed, “Broad overviews of the postwar era by historians as diverse in their interpretive approaches as John Lewis Gaddis, Gabriel Kolko, and Thomas J. McCormick...have identified credibility as a cardinal precept for America’s policymaking elite.”¹⁶ However, Revisionist historians have generally given more attention and legitimacy to credibility as a determinant of international behavior, and none more so than McCormick.

Credibility is especially important to this study. As will be discussed further, the American defeat in Vietnam deeply concerned President Ford and his primary foreign policy adviser, Henry Kissinger. Both believed that the nation’s prestige and leadership had been seriously compromised during the long years of the American involvement, with dangerous consequences for both the United States’ future standing in the world and international equilibrium.¹⁷ Kissinger’s own words underscore the importance he attached to American credibility in the aftermath of Vietnam and his understanding of its significant double meaning. “No serious policy maker could allow himself to succumb to the fashionable debunking of ‘prestige’ or ‘honor’ or ‘credibility.’ We could not

¹⁶ Ibid., 457-458.

¹⁷ Walter Isaacson reveals Kissinger’s preoccupation with credibility by noting, “From his *Foreign Affairs* piece in 1968, to his analysis of Vietnam options in 1969, to his arguments in early 1975 as Saigon was falling, Kissinger put enormous weight on the credibility argument.” Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.), 656.

revitalize the Atlantic Alliance if its governments were assailed by doubt about American staying power. We would not be able to move the Soviet Union toward the imperative of mutual restraint against the background of capitulation in a major war.”¹⁸

For the United States to regain and sustain its dominant position, then, American credibility needed to be restored. The Angolan conflict, which escalated even as the North Vietnamese began their speedy dispatch of the American-supported South Vietnamese government and military forces, presented a timely opportunity to rehabilitate American resolve and competence.

Explaining American Foreign Policy: The Pericentric Paradigm

Aside from the dialectic of the Traditional versus Revisionist debate, historian Tony Smith has introduced an alternative way to think about super-power behavior as it relates to the expansion of the Cold War. In explaining the need for a Pericentric framework, Smith argues that the existing frameworks for analyzing American policy have avoided, ignored, or simply discounted “actors other than those in Washington and Moscow (and at times Beijing) for being able to mold events to the degree that they could.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 228.

¹⁹ Tony Smith, “New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 591. Smith’s criticism is not entirely warranted, at least as it is directed at Revisionism. There are a number of Revisionist studies that emphasize the initiative of peripheral actors in fomenting and escalating super-power tensions in the Third World. These include, but are not limited to, Thomas McCormick’s broad overview of American foreign policy in the latter half of the 20th century. He extensively discusses sub-imperialism, which he defines as the use of substitutes or proxies to act on behalf of a given core power in the periphery. This type of policy, however, contained a

Pericentrism focuses on the role played by Third World leaders. Historians (and statesmen) have traditionally portrayed these individuals as pawns or proxies of the great powers. According to Smith, they sometimes acted defensively or out of fear. Just as often, however, they were “high-rolling risk takers, committed ideologues, brazen manipulators and opportunists able to use the world crisis for their own needs.”²⁰ At times, they engaged in deliberate actions that pulled Moscow and Washington (and sometimes Beijing) into situations they neither desired nor anticipated. These peripheral leaders were self-centered and self-motivated because during the Cold War they “had obtained valuable resources that might be lost should the superpowers come to terms.”²¹ Their actions contributed to the extension of super-power involvement around the globe, which also increased the longevity of the Cold War. In short, as Revisionist and World Systems historian Thomas McCormick had told us some five years before in his study,

dangerous threat to global stability. “Unilateral actions by proxies might drag the great powers into open conflict, against their interest and judgment. In other words, the tail might wag the dog.” McCormick, *America’s Half-Century*, 186. More recently, studies by Piero Gleijeses on the Cuban involvement in Africa, with a focus on Angola, and by Kathryn Weathersby on the Korean War emphasize the initiative and independent actions of Fidel Castro and Kim Il Sung, respectively. Importantly, their studies also demonstrate the cautious and largely unenthusiastic attitude of the Kremlin decision makers for the actions of their Communist allies. Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1956-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Kathryn Weathersby, “The Korean War Revisited,” *Wilson Quarterly* 32 (Summer 1999): 91-97.

²⁰ Smith, “New Bottles for New Wine,” 569.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 588-589.

America's Half-Century, Smith argues that there is such a thing in international relations as “the tail wagging the dog.”²²

Post-Revisionism and the Historical Debate

Since the 1980s, the efforts of the Post-revisionists to find some consensus in Cold War historiography have failed to bridge the gap between the core assumptions of the Traditional perspective and those of the Revisionists. Post-revisionists, whose leading spokesmen has been John Lewis Gaddis, contend that they represent a synthesis of thinking that “draws from both traditional and revisionist interpretations” to present a more accurate and balanced explanation of the Cold War.²³

²² McCormick, *America's Half-Century*, 186.

²³ John Lewis Gaddis, “The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1983): 172. J. Samuel Walker was the first historian to use the term “Post-Revisionism” to describe the alleged synthesis between Traditionalism and Revisionism. J. Samuel Walker, “Historians and Cold War Origins: The New Consensus,” in *American Foreign Relations: A Historiographical Review*, ed. Gerald K. Haines and J. Samuel Walker (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 207-236. Post-revisionists have generally conceded the following points to Revisionism, but only with explicit qualifications. First, they have incorporated the Revisionist idea of an American empire into their narratives, but their concept of empire is very different. For the Post-revisionist, The American empire was defensive, invited and improvised; the Soviet Union, in contrast, imposed its dominion upon unwilling neighbors. Secondly, while Post-revisionists often analyze the use of economic power in American foreign policy, they emphasize that such uses were designed to achieve political ends, and especially in the early Cold War years, to help “redress the political-military balance of power,” but not to “stave off what was seen as an otherwise inevitable collapse of the capitalist order.” Gaddis, “The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis,” 175. Thirdly, Post-Revisionists concede that, at least early in the Cold War era, American leaders, such as President Truman, believed it necessary to administer a form of shock treatment to garner congressional and public support for the anticipated material and human costs of the containment policy. However, they do not use the revisionist term, “manufacturing consensus,” and reject the revisionist claim that the American leadership extracted support for containment and other American hegemonic policies by systematically positing a life and death struggle between beneficent democracy and sinister Communism. Referring to the 1947 speech announcing the Truman Doctrine, for example, Gaddis remarked, “a certain amount of rhetorical dramatization” was necessary to “prod

Despite this claim to a new consensus, two very distinct interpretations on the Cold War still exist. In fact, both Traditionalists and Revisionists alike have rejected Post-revisionism. Bruce Cumings, a leading voice in the Revisionist camp, called it anti-revisionist, and others, such as Warren F. Kimball, have labeled it “orthodoxy plus archives.”²⁴ Robert Buzzanco perhaps best expressed the Revisionist viewpoint by noting that Post-revisionism still remains tied to the Orthodox umbilical cord in its assumptions about the character of American foreign policy. “Conventional Wisdom, basking in Cold War triumphalism and weighty studies of national security, has virtually returned to the earliest interpretation of U.S. foreign relations, claiming that American leaders acted globally (albeit, sometimes, aggressively) in pursuit of legitimate strategic objectives or to counter dangerous global trends (especially communism) or to promote American values abroad.”²⁵

Orthodox historian Douglas J. Macdonald criticizes Post-revisionism for the attempt to stake out a middle ground of shared responsibility for the Cold War based on “mutual

parsimonious legislators into approving economic and military assistance to Greece and Turkey.” John Lewis Gaddis, “The Cold War, The Long Peace, and the Future,” in *The End of the Cold War, Its Meaning and Implication*, ed. Michael J. Hogan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 23. Still, Gaddis and other Post-revisionists reject the “revisionist view of cynical national administrations imposing their cold-blooded geopolitical visions upon an unsuspecting public.” Gaddis, “The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis,” 180.

²⁴ Bruce Cumings, “‘Revising Postrevisionism,’ or, The Poverty of Theory in Diplomatic History,” *Diplomatic History* 17, no. 4 (Fall 1993): 553; Warren F. Kimball, “Response to Gaddis, The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis,” 198.

²⁵ Robert Buzzanco, “What Happened to the New Left? Toward a Radical Reading of American Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 579.

misperception” and “mutual reactivity” by the superpowers. He opined that the emphasis on joint culpability allowed Post-revisionist historians to bifurcate their analyses of American Cold War policies. They could support American security policies in Europe while criticizing American policies in the Third World with which they sometimes disagreed, such as the Vietnamese conflict. In other words, Macdonald criticizes Post-Revisionists for wanting to have their cake and eat it too.²⁶

Do the New Documents Resolve the Historical Debate?

The demise of the Soviet Union and the subsequent opening of some Soviet and other Communist archives have presented Western scholars with expanded opportunities to reassess Cold War historiography.²⁷ As a result, since the mid-1990s, historians have produced a steady stream of studies that purport, as noted by historian Steven Miner, “to reveal the hidden truths of the Soviet Union.” However, access to the new sources has not resolved the arguments surrounding the different perspectives for explaining

²⁶ Macdonald, “Communist Bloc Expansion in the Early Cold War,” 155. Interestingly, despite Macdonald’s criticisms of Post-revisionists, they still basically support the traditionalist perspective on the expansion of the Cold War in that they generally identify the Soviet Union as the primary culprit. Gaddis does this when he discusses the introduction of super-power hostilities to Asia. Reiterating the Traditionalist’s emphasis on the role of ideology in Soviet foreign policy, he argues that Stalin, Mao Zedong, Kim Il Sung, and Ho Chi Minh enjoyed Marxist-Leninist solidarity and shared “A common sense of ideological euphoria – a conviction that the forces of history were on their side.” According to Gaddis, this certainty, along with often-ambiguous American policies in Asia that created a power and policy vacuum, at times led Stalin to abandon all caution, as evidenced by his approval of the North Korean invasion of South Korea in June 1950. John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1997), 83.

²⁷ The “old” historiography was based almost exclusively on American and Western archival materials.

American foreign policy. As Miner observes, “Documents seldom resolve historical questions.”²⁸ The scholar brings his or her own pre-conceived notions, assumptions, and biases to the table, all of which affect objectivity. Consequently, the historian is susceptible to making important, if not crucial, interpretative mistakes. As historian David L. Anderson more recently noted in his 2006 SHAFR presidential address, “Because ‘facts’ are often incomplete or contested and leave room for subjective interpretation based upon ideology or partisanship, the meaning of past events will always be debatable.”²⁹

A good example of the different interpretations that historians give to their readings of new documents is provided by Douglas Macdonald’s analysis of the Soviet role in the North Korean invasion of South Korea in June 1950 and that of Kathryn Weathersby. Based on her extensive research in Soviet archives, Weathersby argues that the initiative for the North Korean invasion came from Kim Il Sung, and not Josef Stalin. She has documented 48 different discussions between Kim and Stalin before the latter finally gave his conditional approval for the North Korean invasion. Even so, Stalin’s final sanctioning of the offensive came only after Kim had talked to Mao Zedong and received the latter’s promise of support. Weathersby’s analysis reveals not only the agency of

²⁸ Steven M. Miner, “Revelations, Secrets, Gossips, and Lies: Sifting Warily through the Soviet Archives,” *The New York Review of Books* (May 14, 1995): 19, 20.

²⁹ David L. Anderson, “One Vietnam War Should be Enough and Other Reflections on Diplomatic History and the Making of Foreign Policy,” *Diplomatic History* 30, no. 1 (January 2006): 2.

North Korea's Kim, but also Stalin's cautious and pragmatic approach to the problems on the Korean Peninsula. Stalin realized that China's involvement would significantly increase the already high level of tension between the United States and China, deepening the latter's dependence on the Soviet Union.³⁰

In contrast, the orthodox explanation for the invasion based, as Macdonald claims, upon "the new evidence," tells us first, that in the early Cold War, American and others Western leaders were correct in their assumptions about the expansionist ambitions of the Soviet Union. Although Communist expansion was checked in Europe and the Middle East by "robust" containment policies, the lack of a coherent American, or Western, policy in Asia, which created a political vacuum, opened the door for the Kremlin's ideologically driven opportunism.

Secondly, according to Macdonald, the new evidence also shows that, at least early on in Asia, there was a unified Communist bloc directed by Moscow. North Korea was nothing more than a Kremlin satellite in this bloc, and took its orders from the Soviet Union. "The detailed plans for the invasion were drawn up by the Soviets and then communicated to the Koreans. The North Koreans never took any major actions without first consulting with the Soviets. The Soviets were not only not surprised by the timing of the attack, as often claimed, but helped choose its date and timing...By any reasonable

³⁰ Weathersby, "The Korean War Revisited," *passim*.

measurement, this is an unusually high degree of control over the freedom of action of another state.”³¹

Not being a student of the Korean War, nor having reviewed the “new” documents on that conflict, I cannot judge which scholar is most accurate on this issue. Still, it is clear that their differing interpretations come, at least in part, from their judgments and assumptions about the Soviet-American Cold War relationship, the motivations and natures of both nations, and the agency (or lack thereof in the case of the Traditionalist Macdonald) of peripheral actors.

In conclusion, despite the release of many American and some Soviet Cold War documents, not to mention a plethora of memoirs and interviews published since the demise of the Soviet Union, two contrasting interpretations of American (and Soviet) behavior during the Cold War still clearly exist. Pericentrism adds a third framework specifically as Cold War tensions and hostilities manifested themselves in the Third World.

What Do The New Documents Tell Us?

Despite these continuing interpretive differences, the emerging historiography of the Cold War has made important contributions to a more subtle understanding of its globalization within the context of both Soviet and American behavior. These

³¹ Macdonald, “Communist Bloc Expansion in the Early Cold War,” 185.

contributions are especially relevant to Angola's story, as I will explain below. My discussion is based on historian Melvin P. Leffler's reviews of many of the new archival-based studies.³²

First, as Leffler informs us, much of the new historiography suggests that at least in the early post-World War II era, the Soviet Union was not aggressively seeking to expand its dominion and was more concerned with realist "security dilemma" issues. "The Cold War was not a simple case of Soviet expansionism and American reaction. Real-politik held sway in the Kremlin. Ideology played an important role in shaping their perceptions, but Soviet leaders were not focused on promoting worldwide revolution. They were concerned mostly with configurations of power, with protecting their country's immediate periphery, ensuring its security, and preserving their rule."³³ Leffler based this conclusion on new studies by Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov and Vojtech Mastney.³⁴ This point, of course, seriously calls into question the Traditionalist allegation that the Communist ideology was synonymous with expansionism and global domination.

³² Leffler's two review essays are: "Inside Enemy Archives: The Cold War Reopened," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (July-August 1996), [database on-line]; available from JSTOR; "The Cold War: What Do 'We Now Know?'" *American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 501-524.

³³ Leffler, "Inside Enemy Archives."

³⁴ Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), and Vojtech Mastney, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Secondly, American policies also greatly affected the Kremlin's decision making during the Cold War. Zubok and Pleshakov are again instructive. After analyzing Soviet actions from an essentially Traditionalist perspective, emphasizing revolutionary imperialism, Leffler tells us the authors were "forced to admit" that the policies of the West played a key role in Soviet behavior. They further "admit" that Soviet policies were largely defensive and in response to American policy, especially after the Truman Administration's increased bellicosity, as evidenced by the use of Atomic diplomacy and the introduction of the Marshall Plan and later, NATO, among other American initiatives.³⁵

American policy, then, was not quite as passive, or blameless, as the Traditionalists would have us believe. As Leffler points out, as the Cold War expanded, first to Asia, the orthodox account of Soviet, Chinese, Korean and American actions "infuses almost no agency whatsoever into the American side." They "pay almost no attention to the conscious U.S. initiatives to monopolize the occupation of Japan, divide Korea, deploy Marines to China, and accept the return of French rule to Indochina...A full account of the Cold War in Asia...must take cognizance of American actions."³⁶

In sum, and importantly for the purpose of this study, the most recent archival evidence points out two important characteristics of Soviet and American behavior. First,

³⁵ Leffler, "The Cold War: What Do 'We Now Know?'" 511-512.

³⁶ Ibid., 521-522.

Moscow's foreign policy was most often pragmatic and defensive, even if at times opportunistic. Moreover, Soviet behavior was neither inherently aggressive nor expansionist in nature. Given this, one can reasonably question the Ford Administration's allegation that Soviet intervention in Angola was a clear-cut case of Soviet-initiated aggression in support of the MPLA. Indeed, as discussed later in this study, we shall see that the Soviet Union was slow to support its long-term client, even as the American-supported FNLA increased its attacks against the Popular Movement in the spring of 1975.

Secondly, Soviet foreign policy did not occur in a political vacuum. It is imperative to account for the actions of the United States in any explanation of why the Cold War became globalized. The United States intervened in Angola at least as early as January 22, 1975, as the Forty Committee approved the allocation of \$300,000 in alleged "political" monies to Holden Roberto's FNLA. Henry Kissinger and others have downplayed the significance of that funding. However, as we shall see, the financial increase to the FNLA's coffers, not to mention the psychological boost to Roberto's confidence, had serious consequences for the peace accord the three liberation movements had agreed upon at Alvor, Portugal on January 15, 1975.³⁷

³⁷ In early January 1975, the leaders of all three liberation movements met with the Portuguese government in Alvor in southern Portugal. Despite their historical animosities, they agreed upon a peaceful path to independence. Among other things, the Alvor accord established a transitional government in which the

Keeping in mind the above-discussion on what the new documents tell us about the Soviet-American relationship, and the disagreements among historians over how best to explain American foreign policy, in the next few pages I will briefly review the Angolan conflict through the lens of the differing perspectives I have discussed. From this, I will venture some preliminary observations about the American intervention in Angola. These observations will provide the background and basis for my in-depth discussions on the same subject in Chapters 5 to 7.

Explaining American Intervention in Angola: Traditionalism

As discussed earlier, the Traditionalists portray the United States as a historically benevolent and well-intentioned great power, and one whose actions were largely defensive in nature. In contrast, they have assessed the Soviet Union as an aggressive, expansionist power, driven by an ideology that espoused global domination. In the face of such a threat, the United States, as the leader of the Free World, was obligated to oppose Communist aggression. If the Traditionalist perspective is correct, then American intervention in Angola represented a countervailing response to a Soviet initiative to dominate the soon-to-be independent nation and secure a foothold on the African continent.

Portuguese and all three groups would be represented. It also provided for the integration of the three movements' military forces with Portugal's colonial army, elections no later than October 31, 1975, and independence on November 11, 1975.

This is exactly what officials of the Ford Administration have argued. They consistently claimed that it was the Soviet Union's massive and unprovoked support for the MPLA that destroyed the Alvor agreement, led to full-scale civil war, and precipitated the American involvement. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, in an address before the Detroit Economic Club in November 1975, summarized this position. "We cannot ignore...the substantial Soviet buildup of weapons in Angola, which has introduced great-power rivalry into Africa for the first time in 15 years...The United States cannot be indifferent while an outside power embarks upon an interventionist policy...so distant from its homeland and so removed from traditional Russian interests."³⁸

Later, as Congress debated, and disapproved, the White House's request for an additional \$9 million for both the FNLA and UNITA, President Ford again laid the blame for the Angolan war on the Kremlin's doorstep. In his public rebuke to the Senate on December 19, which had just passed the Tunney Amendment prohibiting further American assistance to the two pro-Western factions in Angola, he first asserted that the decision would "profoundly" affect American national security.³⁹ The president then

³⁸ Henry Kissinger, "Building an Enduring Foreign Policy," U.S. Department of State, *The Department of State Bulletin* LXXIII, no. 1903 (December 15, 1975): 843, 844.

³⁹ On December 19, 1975, following the Ford Administration's early November request for an additional \$9 million for the FNLA and UNITA, the Senate overwhelmingly approved the Tunney Amendment, which was attached as a policy rider to the FY 76 Defense Appropriations Act. The amendment,

rhetorically asked, “How can the United States...take the position that the Soviet Union can operate with impunity many thousands of miles away with Cuban troops and massive amounts of military equipment, while we refuse any assistance to the majority of the local people, who ask only for military equipment to defend themselves?”⁴⁰

A few days later, following script and in words eerily reminiscent of Harry Truman’s March 1947 speech, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger defended and justified the American involvement in Angola by noting:

The issue is not whether the country of Angola represents a vital interest to the United States. The issue is whether the Soviet Union, backed by a Cuban expeditionary force, can impose on two-thirds of the population its own brand of government...The issue is whether the United States will disqualify itself from giving a minimal amount of economic and military assistance to the two-thirds of the population that is resisting an expeditionary force

introduced by John Tunney (D-CA), prohibited any additional funding to the pro-American factions, which by November 1975 had already received at least \$32 million in covert American assistance. In late January 1976, the House of Representatives also approved the amendment. President Ford, not wanting to hold up funding to the Defense Department, signed the legislation into law. Moreover, in late November 1975, the White House requested yet another \$28 million for the pro-Western factions in Angola, believing that its request would quietly be approved through a simple budgetary reprogramming by pro-administration members of the Congress. However, in the immediate post-Vietnam era, and with a new Democratic majority Congress trying to reassert its role in foreign policy, the budgetary “shell game” didn’t work. Senator Clark (D-IA), the Chairman of the African Affairs Subcommittee, and the prime mover behind the Tunney Amendment, conducted a series of hearing to try to determine exactly how and why the United States had become involved in the Angolan conflict. Following these hearings of late January to early February 1976, the senator introduced his own amendment – attached as a rider to the Foreign Assistance Act – to prohibit further funding to the “anti-Communist” forces in Angola. Both the Senate and the House approved the Clark Amendment, which remained in effect until its repeal during the Reagan Administration.

⁴⁰ “President Deplores Senate Cutoff of Additional Funds for Angola,” Statement by President Ford (made to correspondents in the press briefing room at the White House on December 19, 1975), Department of State, *The Department of State Bulletin* LXXIV, no. 1908 (January 19, 1976): 76-77.

from outside the hemisphere and a massive introduction of Soviet military equipment.⁴¹

This perspective on the events in Angola quite clearly blames the Soviet Union, aided and abetted by its Cuban proxies, for initiating (and escalating) the conflict. It also portrays American policy as one of modestly supporting the majority of Angolans who were attempting to resist subjugation by the alleged Communist-dominated and Communist-supported MPLA. It is consistent with the Traditionalist framework for explaining American foreign policy, but is it a true representation of what happened in Angola? Besides the official spinning of facts, including the implication that the MPLA was a “minority” political movement, the contention that the United States was simply responding to Soviet-supported aggression is questionable.⁴² The following discussion

⁴¹ “Secretary Kissinger’s News Conference of December 23,” Department of State, *The Department of State Bulletin* LXXIV, no. 1908 (January 19, 1976): 71.

⁴² Officials of the Ford Administration were quick to label the MPLA as a minority political movement with little or no support outside Luanda and the coastal cities to the south. They alleged that this situation meant that the Popular Movement would be unable to politically dominate Angola’s future government after scheduled October elections. This assumed, of course, that black Angolans would vote along strictly ethnic lines and that rural Angolans would be motivated to vote, able to access election sites, and would vote for the more rural-based FNLA and UNITA. While smaller than UNITA’s ethnic base of an estimated two million Ovimbundu, primarily located in rural central and southern Angola, The Mbundu ethnic base of the MPLA, estimated at between 1.4 and 2 million, was larger than the FNLA’s largely rural base of about 700,000 Bakongo. Further, as an assessment by the conservative Hudson Institute noted that the Popular Movement also enjoyed considerable support in rural areas, not just in the major cities. Citing the effectiveness of the MPLA’s political organization, the report concluded that the MPLA would be “at an advantage when and if elections came, but could be outplayed by a Roberto backed militarily by Mobutu’s Zaire or by Savimbi with all his political sagacity, opportunism, and a potential for benefiting from nationalist discord and internecine fighting.” Tunde Adeniran, *Trends in World Affairs: Africa in the Years to Come*, vol. 5, *Angola* (Croton-on-Hudson, New York: Hudson Institute, Inc., 1975), 61, 67.

shows that we must look beyond the administration's "official story" to more correctly explain the American intervention.

Explaining American Intervention in Angola: Revisionism

As previously noted, Revisionists assume, and argue, that the United States has historically been expansionist both for economic and geostrategic reasons. In the Cold War era, Washington's pursuit of these dual goals often led the United States to intervene in the affairs of the Third World where nationalist movements, often led by radical Socialists or Marxist-Leninists, posed a threat to the American objectives. As a result, the United States was, more often than not, the main provocateur in the globalization of Soviet-American tensions and hostilities.

As it relates to Angola, a Revisionist perspective would tell us that we should not be surprised if the American involvement not only preceded that of the Soviet Union, but also triggered the latter's intervention. Both the Pike Committee and Senator Clark suggested just that. Referring to the Forty Committee's January allocation of \$300,000 to Holden Roberto's FNLA, the Pike report noted, "Later events have suggested that the infusion of U.S. aid, unprecedented and massive in the underdeveloped colony, may have panicked the Soviets into arming their MPLA clients, whom they had backed for over a decade and who were now in danger of being eclipsed by the National Front."⁴³

⁴³ "The CIA Report the President Doesn't Want to Read," 85.

To this questioning of the administration's defense of the "modest" amount of money, Senator Clark added his own doubt. "The assumption that the United States is merely reacting to a Soviet initiative in Angola is itself at least open to question. According to reports, the 40 Committee authorized \$300,000 in January 1975. This is a small amount, but it is difficult to be sure that the Soviets so perceived it before their more significant escalation in March."⁴⁴

Actually, that sum, as the Pike Committee indicated, was considerable in a poor Third World country such as Angola. Moreover, Holden Roberto, as we will see, was quick to spend it in a very public, noticeable way. The important point here is that both chambers of Congress questioned the administration's argument that the Soviets had intervened first in support of the MPLA. Both were correct in their suspicions that the White House's account of the American intervention was misleading.

Also, there is credible evidence that the United States, via the CIA, was actively involved with the FNLA months before the January 1975 allocation of political funds. Former CIA agent John Stockwell, who headed the task force overseeing the American intervention in Angola (code name IAFEATURE), has written that on *July 7, 1974* (my emphasis), the CIA began covert funding of Holden Roberto, without Forty Committee approval. The subsidy was in "small amounts at first, but enough for word to get around

⁴⁴ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 2.

that the CIA was dealing itself into the race.”⁴⁵ It should be noted that the CIA has never refuted the substance of Stockwell’s narrative of the American involvement in Angola.

In fact, William Colby, the Director of Central Intelligence and the CIA during the Angolan crisis, has affirmed the account, calling it “substantially correct.”⁴⁶

From the above discussion, we can at least come to two initial conclusions. First, contrary to the Ford Administration’s official account, the American intervention in Angola appears not to have been a simple case of the United States belatedly responding to Soviet-initiated aggression designed to forcefully impose Communism upon the unwilling majority of Angolans. Secondly, there is a distinct possibility that American

⁴⁵ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 67. Although Stockwell contends that the CIA “began” covert funding of Holden Roberto in July 1974, there is substantial evidence that modest American support for him dated to at least 1962, and probably before. In 1969, however, Roberto’s American support was reportedly reduced to an annual stipend of \$10,000 to pay for his “intelligence reporting” on Angolan activities. See Leslie Gelb, “U.S., Soviets, China Reported Aiding Portugal, Angola,” *New York Times*, September 23, 1975, 22 and Seymour Hersh, “Early Angola Aid by U.S. Reported,” *New York Times*, December 19, 1975, 14. This early support is discussed further in succeeding chapters. Although Stockwell never tells us exactly how much more American funding the CIA provided to Holden Roberto in July 1974, we know from Gleijeses’ research that it amounted to \$10,000 per month. “Mulcahy to SecState,” May 13, 1975, Policy Planning Staff, Box 368, National Archives, as cited in Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 281. By the time of the Forty Committee’s allocation of \$300,000 in January 1975, then, Roberto would have received \$60-\$70,000 dollars from this increase.

⁴⁶ Albert B. Crenshaw, “Colby on Ex-Agent: ‘Wouldn’t Say He Made up Any of This,’” *Washington Post*, May 15, 1978, sec. A, p. 1. Colby’s affirmation of the Stockwell account was only one of many other revelations about the American intervention in Angola that the former CIA director disclosed in interviews and in his own memoirs several years after he resigned, involuntarily, from the Agency in early November 1975. See also Peter Pringle, “Colby: What CIA Did in Angola,” *The Sunday Times* (London), May 21, 1978, 9. The information in both cited newspaper articles was based on an interview with William Colby on CBS Television’s “60 Minutes,” May 14, 1978, and John Stockwell, *The Secret Wars*, interview by Morley Safer, CBS Television “60 Minutes,” vol. X, no. 35, May 7 1978. See also William Colby and Peter Forbath, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 297-298, 311-317, 340-341.

actions actually provoked the Soviet Union into increasing its support for its long-time MPLA client, which in early 1975 was, literally, struggling to survive against escalating FNLA military attacks.

If the United States was the first to intervene in the building Angolan storm, what then was the reason? As consistently claimed by Henry Kissinger and others, and reiterated by Senator Clark in his early 1976 hearings, the United States had no tangible strategic interests, economic or otherwise, in Angola. Here, the Revisionist perspective is most instructive. In attempting to more fully explain American Cold War policies, as I have previously discussed, some Revisionists have examined a psychological dimension of power - credibility – especially as it involves either a real or perceived decline in American power or dominance following the debacle in Southeast Asia.

This issue was prominent in the Senate Africa Subcommittee's early 1976 hearings on American policy in Angola. For example, in his opening comments, the subcommittee's chairman, Senator Dick Clark, rhetorically asked what was at stake for the United States. Citing administration representatives, he noted that they "have repeatedly – and I believe accurately – assured us that the United States is not in Angola to protect either strategic, military, or economic interests." The senator then added that these same officials most frequently argued that "our credibility" was at stake. A victory by the Soviet-backed MPLA "would prove that the United States does not have the will to defend the world

against Soviet aggression.”⁴⁷ More succinctly, as Kissinger himself expressed it to those who would criticize the American involvement in Angola as unnecessary and contrary to American interests on the continent, “You may be right in African terms, but I’m thinking globally.”⁴⁸

Explaining American Intervention in Angola: Pericentrism

It is reasonable to ask if there was a dynamic operating in the Angolan crisis that drew the United States into a conflict it neither desired nor anticipated. After all, it was Henry Kissinger who pointed out (if deceptively, as I will demonstrate) the significance of Zambia in the American decision to take some action in Angola. “Only on the rarest occasions does a single state visit change American national policy. Yet President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia managed to accomplish precisely that feat when he came to Washington on April 19, 1975. On that occasion, he convinced President Ford and me that the Soviet Union was intervening in Angola with military advisers and weapons and that we should oppose this intrusion for the sake of Angola’s neighbors.”⁴⁹

Moreover, the Pike Committee alluded, if somewhat vaguely, to the influence of African friends on the American decision. “Dr. Kissinger’s desire to reward and protect African leaders in the area,” might have been a “paramount factor” in the decision to

⁴⁷ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 2.

⁴⁸ As quoted in McCormick, *America’s Half-Century*, 189.

⁴⁹ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 792.

intervene.”⁵⁰ The Committee further noted that that the Forty Committee’s January 1975 allocation of \$300,000 to Holden Roberto and his FNLA came only after President Mobutu of Zaire had requested American assistance.⁵¹ At this point, we need not be concerned if the Pike Committee’s findings somewhat contradict the Kissinger account of just which “African friend” was most influential in the American decision to intervene. The important question, to which I will devote much attention in Chapter 6, is, “Was Washington unduly influenced by one or more of its African friends, also including South Africa, and inadvertently “pulled” into the conflict?”

Conclusion

Angola’s story has an important role to play in the ongoing debate over how best to explain American foreign policy. As I explore the Angolan crisis in greater depth, a more accurate representation of foreign intervention, especially that of the United States, will emerge. My evidence-based account will call into question not only the administration’s official story, which still informs many recollections of the Angolan Civil War, such as Henry Kissinger and President Ford’s own memoirs, but also the assumptions and arguments upon which Traditionalism has rested its case.⁵²

⁵⁰ “The CIA Report the President Doesn’t Want to Read,” 85.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, especially Chapter 26, “Civil War in Africa,” pp. 791-833; Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford* (Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1979), pp. 345-346, 358-359.

Moreover, it will show that focusing the pericentric lens on the Angolan crisis does not adequately explain the American intervention. Zambia, Zaire and South Africa, especially the latter two, were all involved in the Angolan crisis on the side of the anti-MPLA coalition. As we will see, however, other factors related to the issue of American credibility were more important in President Ford's decision to covertly support both the FNLA and UNITA.

CHAPTER 1

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, AFRICA AND THE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE: THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA

“There is absolutely no change likely in the immediate attitude and determination of the Portuguese Government with respect to their African provinces. Without abandoning our principles looking toward government by the consent of the governed...I see no purpose to be gained by unnecessarily precipitating irritations in Portuguese-United States relations.”

U.S. Ambassador to Portugal, Admiral George W. Anderson⁵³

In beginning to understand the rationale for the American involvement in Angola during the mid-1970s, we must first look to the long Cold War relationship between the United States and its NATO ally, Portugal. Well after the other European colonial powers had ceased direct rule of their colonies in Africa, Portugal refused to follow suit. Portuguese intransigence on the colonial question persisted, despite relentless and increasing international condemnation beginning in the late 1950s as more and more Third World nations gained their independence.

⁵³ In 1963, Admiral Anderson, the Chief of Naval Operations during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, became the American Ambassador to Portugal. The abbreviated quote above is taken from Enclosure 1 to Airgram, Lisbon A-328, 14 March 1966, 1-2; quoted in Michael A. Samuels and Stephen M. Haykin, “The Anderson Plan: An American Attempt to Seduce Portugal Out of Africa,” *Orbis* 22 (Fall 1979): 667. Although issued in 1966, the Admiral’s statement wholly expresses the dilemma the United States encountered in its relationship with the Portuguese empire, especially from the Kennedy Administration onward. At the time this article was published, Samuels was Executive Director for Third World Studies at Georgetown University’s Center for Strategic and International Studies and from 1975-1977 had served as American Ambassador to the Republic of Sierra Leone. Haykin was an Economic Research Assistant at the International Food Policy Research Institute and a candidate for the Joint Master of Science in Foreign Service-Master of Arts in Economics, at Georgetown University.

This chapter, which is based primarily on secondary sources, first addresses the broad evolution of American's African policy in the Cold War. It provides the historical context for Washington's attitudes and actions toward African affairs up to the mid-1970s, when the United States intervened in the Angolan crisis. It also unravels the dilemma that European colonialism and neocolonialism presented to American efforts to find a middle road between the oft-stated commitment to idealistic values, such as self-determination and human rights, and Cold War realism.

The United States, in fact, most often resolved the predicament in favor of continued support for European policies. In doing so, Washington subordinated nationalist aspirations in sub-Saharan Africa to what it believed were two more important and closely connected goals: maintaining stability, either through colonialism or neocolonialism, mostly to ensure continued access to Africa's mineral wealth, and preventing Communist influence in the region. In regard to the latter objective, the history of American relations with sub-Saharan African during the Cold War shows that African nationalism was most often held hostage to super-power competition, with the East-West struggle trumping the North-South dimensions of global politics. Within this environment, American policy makers, with one notable exception – President Kennedy - were prone to mistakenly equate nationalism with Communism.

Following this overview, I will focus on the specific case of Portugal. Lisbon steadfastly refused to end its “civilizing mission” in Africa, and it held an ace up its sleeve that complicated American efforts to move it toward decolonization. Portugal’s leverage derived, in large part, from the American desire for continued access to the military facilities at Lajes in the Azores. Lisbon was quick to employ the Azores lease issue to silence, or at least muffle, criticisms of its colonial policies. This strategy made it difficult for successive American presidents to substantially shift American policy to a position of anti-Portuguese colonialism, even if they had so desired.

Only one Cold War president, John F. Kennedy, risked endangering American use of the Azores by supporting self-determination for Lisbon’s overseas territories. Despite the best efforts of Kennedy-era diplomats, which continued briefly into the Johnson Administration, Portugal’s colonial policy essentially remained unchanged until a small group of mostly junior officers, known as the Armed Forces Movement, successfully overthrew the Lisbon regime in April 1974. These young officers, many of them seasoned colonial soldiers, were motivated in large part by their first-hand knowledge of the futile destructiveness of their nation’s imperial policies.

A General Perspective on the United States and Africa

Africa has seldom been a major focus or concern of American foreign policy decision makers, although important American strategic interests in the continent, particularly in

the mineral wealth of central and southern Africa, date back to at least World War II. During that period, as the United States began research and development of the atomic bomb, it depended heavily on uranium supplied by the Belgian firm, Union Miniere, from its mines in the former Belgian Congo.⁵⁴ This commercial arrangement grew in importance after the Soviet Union exploded its first A-bomb in the fall of 1949, which prompted President Truman's January 1950 decision to proceed with American development of the hydrogen fusion bomb. The outbreak of hostilities on the Korean Peninsula in June 1950 and the adoption of the recommendations of National Security Council Study 68 (NSC-68) in September 1950, which called for an across-the-board buildup in U.S. military forces, further increased the American uranium requirement for the projected growth in its nuclear arsenal.

American concerns over continued unfettered access to uranium in the Belgian Congo led to a joint American-Belgian mission to the colony in the early 1950s. Its purpose was to investigate and assess the security of the uranium mines and to develop contingency plans for their protection in the event of threats of disruption by hostile forces. Such forces were presumed to be the indigenous peoples then working the mines for the

⁵⁴The Belgian Congo gained its independence on 1 July 1960 and initially became known as the Congo (Leopoldville) to distinguish it from the former French Congo (Brazzaville). After the name-change of the capital city, Leopoldville, to Kinshasa, the country was called Congo (Kinshasa). During the years of the Mobutu regime, the Congo (Kinshasa) became Zaire, and has since again changed its name, this time to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Belgian firm. As recounted by British Political Scientist George Wright, upon conclusion of the mission, George Marshall, then Secretary of Defense, sent a memorandum to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, explaining that the continued flow of uranium to the United States could be in danger “if ‘a large-scale uprising of the natives in the area or considerable disaffection of the natives employed in the mines’ were to occur. The US awareness prompted the administration to send \$7 million in military equipment to ‘bolster Belgian authority.’ The CIA also established a ‘controlled source’ in the colony ‘to provide early warning of any problem’, and initiated a plan [to prepare] for covert countersabotage’.”⁵⁵

These early American connections to Africa were very narrow. They centered on Union Miniere and its role in the continued supply of uranium for American nuclear research and development and on further expanding the growing commercial ties with South Africa, including increasing imports of South African uranium. Washington gave little or no consideration to the majority black Africans or their aspirations for independence from the European colonial powers.

Africa’s importance, then, derived solely from its role as a repository of critical minerals – copper and chrome in addition to uranium - and unfettered American access to

⁵⁵Thomas Borstelmann, “Apartheid, Colonialism and the Cold War: The United States and Southern Africa, 1945-1952” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1990), 478-481; cited in Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*, 19.

this strategic wealth. As such, the goal of American policy during the colonial period was the maintenance of stability through preservation of the status quo. Even later, after the major wave of decolonization began in the mid-to-late 1950s, this objective persisted. Although the status quo shifted from colonialism to neo-colonialism, Washington found this wholly acceptable because it still contributed to stability. The desire for stability, as noted by historian Kenneth Mokoena, caused American decision makers to be “intent upon encouraging moderate forces in southern Africa and profoundly suspicious of, or even hostile to, radical change.”⁵⁶

The American quest for the holy grail of stability intersected with what are, chronologically, two relatively distinct phases of development in 20th century sub-Saharan Africa: the colonial era, which began to unravel in the mid-1950s and resulted in the independence of most African nations by the early 1960s; the period following decolonization during which the former imperial powers of Belgium, France and Great Britain constructed a neo-colonial architecture allowing them continued influence, especially of an economic nature, in the ex-colonies. During both phases, Portugal, whose colonialism dated back to the 15th century, resisted pressures to grant

⁵⁶ Kenneth Mokoena, ed., *South Africa and the United States: The Declassified History* (NY: The New Press, 1993), xi. Mokoena’s book is a compilation of primary American documents obtained by the National Security Archive through the Freedom of Information Act.

independence to its overseas territories until the makers of the April 1974 Portuguese coup decided to end, at long last, the nation's civilizing mission.⁵⁷

During this nearly thirty-year period in the aftermath of the Second World War, there was only one exception to American support for Portuguese colonialism. This occurred during the Kennedy Administration when, as will be discussed later, Washington tried, if unsuccessfully, to move Lisbon in the direction of granting self-determination for its colonies. Kennedy officials who remained in the Johnson Administration continued these efforts for several years. By then, however, continued Portuguese intransigence and other issues, especially the growing war in Southeast Asia, consumed Washington's energy and attention.

This trend continued into the Nixon Administration as the continuing conflict in Southeast Asia, Soviet-American détente, and American-Chinese relationships dominated the American foreign policy agenda. Washington's policy swung back to unconditional support for Lisbon, its NATO partner. President Nixon, never one to mince words, made the American attitude toward Portugal's colonialism very clear in April 1969 when he

⁵⁷ The Republic of South Africa, which departed the British-led Commonwealth in 1961 following a minority white plebiscite, continued to illegally occupy Namibia (formerly Southwest Africa) and colonize that erstwhile German colony until the late 1980s while also practicing a form of internal colonization with its Bantustan homelands policy. Rhodesia declared its independence from Great Britain in 1965 (the so-called Unilateral Declaration of Independence, or UDI) and minority white rule continued there until 1980.

told the visiting Portuguese Foreign Minister, Franco Nogueira, “Just remember, I’ll never do to you what Kennedy did.”⁵⁸

The United States, Colonialism, and Communism: An Overview

During the preeminent years of the colonial era following World War II, which bracketed the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations, American decision makers disguised their trepidations over the potential for instability and revolutionary change in colonial Africa by cloaking them in the idea of “premature independence.” Premature independence served as a metaphor for a plethora of American fears about the increasing international demands for black African liberation and the potential for Communist penetration of the Third World – two different dynamics which the United States conveniently conflated for policy purposes.

American antipathy toward premature independence helps explain the generally unwavering support for the policies of the colonial powers in Africa, even while the United States ostensibly supported the Charter of the United Nations, which called upon all signatories to promote global self-determination, human rights and egalitarianism.⁵⁹

In attempting to find a middle road, or balance, between support for colonial maintenance

⁵⁸ Nixon made this statement at a ceremony on April 10, 1969, marking NATO’s twentieth anniversary. Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 243.

⁵⁹ Following World War II, Washington’s priority was the rebuilding of Western Europe and the establishment of a trans-Atlantic security bloc. In addition to the concerns about the possible effects of “premature independence,” the United States also deferred to European colonialism to attain support for NATO, and in the case of France, for the rearming of West Germany within the Atlantic Alliance.

of the status quo on the one hand, and at least a rhetorical commitment to idealistic values on the other, the United States almost always opted for the first since the alternative to white minority rule appeared worse – instability and a vacuum for Communist infiltration.

The notion of premature independence, the perceived dangers it presented to stability, and the resultant American deferral to European colonial policies were evident in American foreign policy no later than 1950. According to Gabriel Kolko, then Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, George McGhee, used the term to signify American support for the colonial powers' resolve and intentions to hold onto their African empires. "The metropolitan powers need reassurance from the United States that we are not purposefully working to bring about a premature according of political independence to the peoples of Africa."⁶⁰

Thomas Noer adds that McGhee, in elaborating upon the American stance against premature independence, labeled "Africa 'a fertile field for communism...' warning against 'premature independence for primitive, underdeveloped peoples.' McGhee

⁶⁰ Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World: United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 12.

argued that black governments would be ‘unprepared to meet aggression or subversion’ and would thus be a threat to ‘the security of the free world.’”⁶¹

Once decolonization became inevitable, during the Eisenhower Administration, and as independent nations quickly emerged in central and southern Africa, American opposition to premature independence as a justification for continued imperialism became somewhat of an anachronism. By 1960, a year when seventeen new African nations entered the United Nations, the profoundly changed situation in Africa brought a new dynamic to the world stage – a North-South dialogue in which the newly liberated nations raised their collective voice in support for the independence of the world’s remaining colonized peoples. This new dimension of global politics was manifested in increased condemnations of colonialism in the UN and other international arenas. It also brought forth numerous proposals and resolutions, many initiated and designed by the newly independent African nations and their Third World sympathizers, to diplomatically and economically isolate the remaining minority white regimes. The Communist bloc usually supported these actions, while the United States and the colonial powers of Western Europe most often opposed them.

The altered environment of the late 1950s presented the United States with not only an opportunity to steer a new course in its policy toward southern Africa, but also a

⁶¹Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 30.

challenge to its long-standing support for the white regimes. The opportunity - the road not taken in this case, with the exception of the Kennedy years - essentially involved encouragement and support for the development of the new nations along lines that made sense within the context of African realities, as well as a sincere and demonstrable commitment to seeking an end to the colonial system in Portuguese Africa and minority rule elsewhere in southern Africa.

The challenge, reflecting Cold War American foreign policy priorities, remained one of ensuring stability and minimizing Communist influence on the African continent so that Western European neo-colonialism and white rule could function in an environment designed to perpetuate their longevity. Related to this prime directive, as southern Africa's liberation movements developed and gained momentum, threatening to destabilize white dominion, the United States sought to discredit most of them either as terrorists or Communists (and usually both). Especially during the Kennedy Administration, Holden Roberto of the FNLA (Angola) and Eduardo Mondlane, the leader of FRELIMO (Mozambique) until his assassination in 1969, were the exceptions to this general hostility toward the liberation movements.⁶²

⁶² The American government's brief support to Holden Roberto of the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), starting at least as early as 1961, during the Kennedy Administration, and continuing at modest levels until 1969, as well as its support for Eduardo Mondlane of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), were designed to gain American influence with the nationalists and ensure that the United States would have a pro-Western ally in a strong position when, and if, Portugal decided, or was

As will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, the Eisenhower Administration failed to take advantage of the new opportunity presented by decolonization. As a result, the United States paid a heavy price for its continued support of southern Africa's white minority regimes, Portuguese colonialism, and French and English neo-colonialism. That cost included a loss of respect by many black African leaders (and future leaders) who labeled the United States as "timid hypocrites,"⁶³ the subversion of American ideals and commitment to human rights, and a counter-productive strategy for achieving the principal goal of the Cold War – containing and isolating the Soviet Union.⁶⁴ The latter

forced, to give up its colonial empire. In the case of Angola, American support for Roberto was also aimed at offsetting the modest support the Soviet Union was providing to the MPLA. Mondlane had studied and taught in the United States. He had impressed many of those individuals, such as Chester Bowles, who would become the staunch supporters of African nationalism in the Kennedy Administration, as well as the president's brother, Robert Kennedy. As noted by Thomas Noer, like Holden Roberto, Mondlane, "impressed Americans with his anticommunism. Until his assassination in 1969, he kept FRELIMO 'acceptable' to U.S. officials." Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 68. According to Thomas Borstelmann, since South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) had links to the South African Communist Party, it "qualified as an organization of unacceptable revolutionaries." Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 156-157.

⁶³ Chester Bowles, *Africa's Challenge to America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 101.

⁶⁴ The Soviet Union became increasingly active on the African continent in the early 1960s, following the collapse of an earlier diplomatic offensive in the Third World, which commenced in the mid-1950s during the early Khrushchev years. This second diplomatic offensive proved more successful than the first for a variety of reasons. First, by the early 1960s much of sub-Saharan Africa had been decolonized, which opened the door for the establishment of official diplomatic relations. Secondly, the Sino-Soviet split and China's own increased activities on the continent ensured that Moscow would involve itself in Africa rather than cede the region to the Chinese revisionists. Thirdly, the establishment of the Organization for African Unity in 1963, including its Liberation Committee in Dar-es-Salaam, provided an internationally acceptable method for supporting southern Africa's liberation movements against the remaining bastions of white power.

made hay while the sun shined, so to speak, through its consistent support, in words and actions, for the struggle of the African liberation movements against the white rulers.

Another, and distinct, phase of American policy toward Africa, and southern Africa specifically, began during the Kennedy Administration as the new president faced the opportunities and challenges of the changed international environment. During the Kennedy and very early Johnson White House years, the previous American concerns over “premature independence” gave way to a concerted support for self-determination in the Portuguese colonies.

Chester Bowles, who briefly served as one of President Kennedy’s Under Secretaries of State, provided an early outline for this new direction in American policy. In 1956, the former ambassador to India delivered a series of lectures at the University of California in which he severely criticized the militarization of American foreign policy. Ambassador Bowles advocated a return to America’s traditional belief in the rights of self-determination and self-government and an increased sensitivity toward African nationalism. Countering the idea that concessions to African nationalism endangered Western access to strategic raw materials and opened the door to Communist penetration, the ambassador argued that policy based on such assumptions only “made a bad situation worse...Our fascination with the activities of our adversary has served again to twist our

perspective, blind us to the real nature of forces which are at work, and, most harmful of all, maneuver us into appearing to support the hated and doomed status quo.”⁶⁵

A year later, in July of 1957, then Senator John F. Kennedy, who in 1959 would become chairman of the newly established Subcommittee on Africa, began attacking the Eisenhower Administration’s support for the French in Algeria. The future president, sounding much like Chester Bowles’ had a year earlier, emphasized that “The sweep of nationalism is the most potent factor in foreign affairs today. We can resist it or ignore it but only for a little while; we can see it exploited by the Soviets with grave consequences; or we in this country can give it hope and leadership, and thus improve immeasurably our standing and our security.”⁶⁶ He would carry this perspective into the White House.

While Bowles and others, such as G. Mennen Williams and Adlai Stevenson, all members of Kennedy’s Administration, were more idealistic in their approach to Africa, emphasizing a moral commitment to self-determination, which they believed reflected historic American ideals, Kennedy’s perspective was pragmatic and “fatalistic.” As

⁶⁵ Bowles, *Africa’s Challenge to America*, 56-57. Bowles further argued that a break with the colonial powers and South Africa was the most effective way to limit Communism’s influence and to convince African nationalists of America’s commitment to black African sovereignty. Ibid., passim.

⁶⁶ Cited in Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*, 22.

explained by historian Richard Mahoney, to him, “decolonization was an inevitable process in which the U.S. had no choice but to participate.”⁶⁷

However, as president, there were some in Kennedy’s inner foreign policy circle who opposed a demonstrable American support for Portuguese decolonization, especially when it risked alienating Lisbon, rupturing the NATO alliance, and jeopardizing American access to the Azores.⁶⁸ This inner circle was made up of those officials primarily concerned with Western Europe and NATO. It included some of the most powerful voices in diplomatic matters, including Secretary of State Dean Rusk and unofficial presidential advisor, Dean Acheson.

Despite the predictable tensions resulting from the differences of opinion, the Africanists and Europeanists in the Kennedy Administration reached an accommodation

⁶⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁸ Portugal’s inclusion as a member of the original twelve-nation North Atlantic Treaty, signed on April 4, 1949, was mainly due to its control of the Azores, which had proven valuable as a refueling base during World War II. As noted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in July 1963, “The importance of Portugal lies primarily in the importance of US base rights in the Azores, and secondarily in the membership of Portugal in NATO.” The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, US Policy Toward Portugal and Republic of South Africa*, JCSM-528-63 (10 July 1963), p. 1 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive (South Africa Collection). The Joint Chiefs of Staff, who never saw a base they didn’t like, consistently argued for the retention of the Azores military facilities, even as Portugal used its control of the islands as leverage to gain at least tacit American support for its colonial policies. In the Memorandum noted above, while negotiations to renew the American lease, which had expired at the end of 1962, were ongoing, the JCS argued that criticism of Portugal’s African policies were negatively affecting efforts to “revitalize” NATO, including the renewal of the lease agreement. “The divisive effect on NATO of further censure of Portugal cannot be dismissed. At a time when the Alliance is already strained, the withdrawal of Portugal as a result of affronts by her Allies could dangerously weaken our efforts to revitalize NATO.” The military leaders further noted “The peacetime contribution of the Republic of South Africa to US security is considerably less important than that of Portugal.” Ibid., 2.

on the colonial conundrum: self-determination came to signify measured decolonization. This meant that Portugal, nudged along by American encouragement, would steadily, over the course of some specified time frame, implement the reforms needed to improve the economic, social and political positions of the black majorities in its African colonies. Washington hoped that this gradual reform process would eventually result in a plebiscite in which the local inhabitants, both white and black, would vote on their future relationship with the metropole.

This concept of self-determination, then, left the door open for a continued close association between Lisbon and the colonies.⁶⁹ Even if the vote resulted in independence, the projected transition time frame, expected to be lengthy, would allow the Portuguese to construct a system of interdependence between the colonies and the metropole, facilitating the continued influence of the latter in its former territories.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ President Kennedy, reflecting the thinking of many of his European and some of his African advisers, expressed these sentiments in an October 1962 meeting with the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Franco Nogueira, the purpose of which was to discuss the impending re-negotiations of the American Azores base agreement, which was set to expire on 31 December 1962. As recounted by George Wright, the president enquired if Portugal would consider publicly accepting the principle of self-determination for its colonies. Nogueira responded by noting, “if Portugal made that statement, the African and Asian countries at the UN ‘would call for independence in Angola and Mozambique and by the end of the year the African continent would become communist.’” The foreign minister obviously knew what Cold War Kennedy buttons to press. The president then “stressed that if Portugal supported self determination, it would not mean Portugal had to agree to automatic independence.” Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*, 43.

⁷⁰ Kennedy’s Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, G. Mennen Williams, who also served in that capacity until 1966 during the Johnson Administration, discussed the American version of “gradual” decolonization and self-determination in his post-Kennedy-era book, *Africa for the Africans*. He argued that the Portuguese refusal to grant self-determination in its colonies increased the danger of both a violent solution to the issue and the chances for Communist exploitation. These consequences of Portuguese

Kennedy's belief that nationalism in the Third World represented the most powerful dynamic of the 20th century led him to oppose and challenge European colonialism and neo-colonialism, as will be discussed later in this chapter. The president also intended for that United States, not Western Europe, to play the leading role in Africa. This meant, as diplomatic historian David Gibbs has pointed out, that while the United States "never attempted completely to cut the neo-colonial ties between Europe and Africa," it sought to weaken them.⁷¹

Despite the clear break with the policy of his predecessor, Eisenhower, the predominant East-West dimension of Cold War politics soon made itself felt. During the last year of his administration, with the Azores lease quickly approaching its expiration date, Kennedy moderated his position towards Portugal. There were, as Gibbs points out, recognized limits to Kennedy's challenge to the West European allies. "When the policy

inaction would, at the same time, decrease the possibility for their continued influence in the colonies, which would invariably, one way or another, gain their independence. Advocating a timetable to prepare the territorial people for self-determination, Governor Williams then noted that self-determination "does not necessarily mean that independence would be the end result of such a program...We exclude no option. The people should be given the right to choose between alternatives – to continue present ties with Portugal, to join a Portuguese commonwealth, or to strike out completely independently...If the Portuguese government grants self-determination and encourages and intensively prepares the indigenous people to decide their future, the long-term prospects for the maintenance of a Portuguese presence in Africa – with or without political ties – will be greatly enhanced. The present impasse...can only produce even greater antagonisms detrimental to long-term Portuguese interests." G. Mennen Williams, *Africa for the Africans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 132-133.

⁷¹ David N. Gibbs, "Political Parties and International Relations: The United States and the Decolonization of Sub-Saharan Africa," *The International History Review* XVII, no. 2 (May 1995): 325. Gibbs' study emphasizes the economic factors involved in the evolution of American support, or in the case of Kennedy, non-support, for European colonialism, especially the growing conflicts between American commercial interests and those of the French and the Belgians, the latter in the Congo (Zaire).

threatened the Atlantic Alliance, which the United States was not willing to sacrifice for anything in Africa, US Africa policy gradually softened. In late 1962, the US delegation at the United Nations voted against economic sanctions against Portugal, and even Mennen Williams conceded that ‘the United States should supplement rather than supplant the former metropole[s]’ in Africa.”⁷²

President Johnson retained many of Kennedy’s principle advisors on African policy, most notably G. Mennen Williams and Adlai Stevenson at the United Nations, for several years after Kennedy’s assassination in November 1963. Still, the new president’s foreign policy interests lay elsewhere, especially with the increasing American military commitment in South Vietnam. With the exception of his personal attention to the renewed instability in the Congo (Leopoldville) in 1964 to 1965, African affairs became the sole domain of the bureaucrats at the State Department. Although the pro-nationalism, anti-colonialism tenor of the Kennedy era continued, albeit in a subdued manner, until 1966, the president’s disinterest sapped the energy and vitality associated with the Kennedy era “new” direction in African policy. At the same time, the Europeanists in the administration regained the upper hand in the bureaucratic wars over Portugal and its continued colonialism. In the changed environment, American policy toward sub-Saharan Africa languished.

⁷² Ibid.

The Nixon Administration reverted official American policy toward the region (such as it was) to solid support for Portugal and the minority white regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa. The “tilt” toward the white regimes, as it became known, was set in motion early in the new administration. In April 1969, the newly inaugurated president and his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, tasked the National Security Council with a review of Washington’s policy toward the region, directing the Council’s interdepartmental study group to develop options to what had become, by then, a directionless policy toward sub-Saharan Africa.

President Nixon approved Option Two of the group’s *Study in Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39: Southern Africa* (NSSM 39). That option advocated a revitalized dialogue between the United States and southern Africa’s white regimes and increased aid to moderate black states in the area. The authors of the policy incorrectly assumed, among other things, that white minority rule in southern Africa was “here to stay,” and that subtle American pressure and encouragement could move the white rulers to effect gradual reforms leading to improvements in the black majority’s economic, and within limits, political status.⁷³ The Nixon Administration tried to keep Option 2 a secret. However its impact, as will be further discussed, quickly became visible.

⁷³ Although most of southern Africa was independent by 1968, the Nixon Administration, in effect, reverted to Eisenhower’s policy of support for white minority rule. While advocating gradual, non-violent change in South Africa and Rhodesia, for example, the administration’s overriding concern was the

President Ford continued the Option Two policy of his predecessor, despite the changes that occurred in sub-Saharan Africa after Lisbon decided to grant its African colonies independence following the April 1974 coup in Portugal. As will be further discussed in Chapter 2, the State Department reviewed the policy several times following the coup and the Portuguese announcement of its intention to grant independence to its African colonies. However, the department's African experts concluded that the policy had served American interests well and recommended no changes. Option Two essentially remained in effect until the spring of 1976 when Henry Kissinger, on his first trip to southern Africa, announced a new course in American policy.⁷⁴

preservation of stability and the status quo and denial of Communist, especially Soviet, influence. The end result, or at least the hoped for result, would be black Africa's acceptance of evolutionary reforms. This was an overly optimistic expectation given the nationalists' persistent opposition to continued white rule, even if in a slightly more economically and socially equitable society. In the case of Rhodesia after its Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965, Washington generally deferred to London's policies in its former colony. However, During the Nixon Administration, the United States did break with the British (and United Nations) position on Rhodesia when it disregarded international sanctions against the importation of Rhodesian chrome. The sanction-busting Byrd Amendment represented one of the most highly visible manifestations of support for the Salisbury government. Sean Gervasi, an authority on decolonization and neo-colonialism in Africa, argues that the hidden assumption of the American objective in promoting evolutionary change in white-controlled areas "is that power is to remain in the hands of the white minority. Improvements are to be sought; but they are to take place within the system. The real aim...is to make the system as liberal and humane as possible; but precisely to preserve it." Sean Gervasi, "The Politics of 'Accelerated Economic Growth,'" in *Change in Contemporary South Africa*, eds., Leonard Thompson and Jeffrey Butler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 368.

⁷⁴ With American prestige in Africa at an all-time low following the failure of Washington's policy in Angola, in April 1976, Henry Kissinger, encouraged by President Ford, visited the region. During his trip, he took the opportunity to announce a new direction for American policy. In Lusaka, Zambia, on April 27, he committed the United States to "unrelenting opposition" to the white regime in Rhodesia (which he purposely referred to as Zimbabwe at one point), while also pledging American support to "self-determination, majority rule, equal rights, and human dignity for all the peoples of southern Africa."

This brief overview of how the United States dealt with the question of European colonialism and neo-colonialism and Communism in Africa in the aftermath of World War II shows that Washington mostly sided with continued white minority rule as a way to maintain stability and limit Communist penetration. The brief years of the Kennedy Administration, somewhat extending into the early years of the Johnson Administration, are the only exception to this historical fact. The following discussion details the circumstances of that support and the abbreviated change in course during the early to mid-1960s.

The Fits and Starts of America's Africa Policy: The Truman Years

The Truman Administration's post-World War II policy toward Africa can be summed up in two words – passive neglect. African nationalists' calls for decolonization and independence had begun early in the colonial era of course. In the aftermath of the Second World War, however, their renewed efforts to bring about decolonization, inspired in part by the Charter of the United Nations, which called for the promotion of self-determination and fundamental human rights and freedoms for all people, went largely unheard. More momentous international events relegated black African voices to the dim wings of the global stage. Moreover, the era of Western European decolonization was nearly ten years in the future and not foreseen at the time by either the

Historic Documents of 1976, "Kissinger on Africa," April 27, 1976 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1977): 287.

colonizers or the United States. Further, the Soviet Union had yet to fashion its own strategies for the Third World and was not pro-actively engaged in Africa.

During the Truman White House years, when “premature independence” first became the justification for continued colonization and white minority rule, the central and southern regions of the continent were rendered important for only one reason.

Washington looked to them as a warehouse for materiel deemed critical to the well being of the American and West European economies and to its Cold War strategies. The broad sweep of African history was generally misunderstood, or not understood at all. The widespread, racially loaded perceptions of Africa as “dark”, both within the American government and among the American people, perpetuated the ignorance and myths surrounding the continent.

Even as the United States increasingly assumed the role as the leader of the Western world, and its international commitments and responsibilities grew accordingly, American interests in, and hence policy toward, Africa remained consistently secondary or even tertiary concerns within the larger global arena.⁷⁵ In so far as Washington ever considered Africa outside the question of its mineral wealth, it was most often within a

⁷⁵ I am probably being overly optimistic about Africa’s place in the priorities of American foreign policy after World War II. As noted by historian Thomas Borstelmann in discussing the Johnson Administration’s minimal attention toward Africa in the face of crises in the Dominican Republic, Berlin, and Vietnam, for example, “Africa remained – as it had been for all his predecessors – the lowest priority in, literally, the world.” Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 175.

Euro-centric context in which Western Europe's post-war reconstruction and the cementing of its relationship to the United States through a trans-Atlantic alliance system assumed primary importance. Thus, the United States would support, even abet, the continuation of Western European imperialism in the aftermath of World War II - as the American support for the French in amply Indochina demonstrated - in order to secure Western European acceptance of the Marshall Plan, the Containment Policy, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, among other American initiatives.

David Gibbs, in reflecting on the Truman Administration's shift away from the anti-colonialism of the previous Roosevelt Administration, notes that anti-colonialism did not disappear entirely. However, "For the most part...the Truman state department tended to tolerate colonialism in Africa to the point, in some instances, of open support." He argues, as I have, that this support occurred "because Truman needed a military and political alliance with Europe to support the United States in its confrontation with the Soviet Union.. European economies, which the United States wished to rebuild, in turn, needed the support of their colonies, whose exports of raw materials earned them dollars."⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Gibbs, "Political Parties and International Relations," 312-313. The United States also provided direct financial assistance to Western European colonialism throughout Africa during the Truman Administration. The author writes, "By early 1951, over \$400 million in Marshall Plan aid had been spent by the British, French, Belgian, and Portuguese empires in Africa, in addition to foreign aid under the Point Four programme." Ibid., 313.

In economic and geo-political terms, this meant, as George Wright argues, that the United States subordinated its goal of achieving an open-door policy to Western Europe's colonies to the more important objectives of rebuilding Western European economies and isolating and containing the Soviet Union through the establishment of an American-led Western Alliance.⁷⁷ Moreover, as long as Western Europe dominated its colonies, continued American access to strategic resources was essentially guaranteed. As assessed by historian Gabriel Kolko, "...what the United States wanted and needed most in Africa – raw materials – it freely got...It was tension and unrest alone that threatened supplies, and this only reinforced its commitment to its allies' hegemony."⁷⁸

The Fits and Starts of America's African Policy: The Eisenhower Years

The Eisenhower Administration essentially continued Truman's policy of "disinterested neglect" toward Africa, but moved toward even more overt support for European colonialism. The new president's foreign policy officials refrained from criticizing either South Africa or Portugal, while warning against the perils of "premature independence." However, the beginning of decolonization in the latter half of the decade briefly increased the attention toward the continent. Although most officials in the

⁷⁷ Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*, 23.

⁷⁸ Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, 113. Kolko argues that continued access to Africa's strategic minerals, and not Communism, was the primary motivation for the historical American support of European colonialism. Washington's fear was "that the removal of European hegemony would lead to local and tribal conflicts...depriving the West of Africa's great economic and strategic resources." Ibid.

Eisenhower Administration viewed the advent of independence for much of Africa with some alarm, as Thomas Noer observes, “it was clear that colonialism in Africa was dying. Faced with the prospect of a sizable number of new nations in the immediate future, Washington accepted the inevitable.”⁷⁹ Still, accepting the inevitable and becoming more interested in Africa, as David Gibbs tells us, was the American response to decolonization and not a signal of a newly found support for it.⁸⁰

In addition to accepting the inevitability of decolonization, Elizabeth Cobbs explains that the most salient reason for the shift in the Eisenhower Administration’s approach was the French-British attempt, along with Israel, to regain control of the Suez Canal. “President Eisenhower furiously demanded that they withdraw lest Nasser seek military support from the Soviets. U.S. officials threatened to cut off Britain’s oil supply and ruin its currency if it refused.” The crisis scarred the Western Alliance, signaled the end of the British Empire, and “also hurt the French war effort in Algeria, where Nasser was supplying the revolutionaries.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 49.

⁸⁰ Gibbs, “Political Parties and International Relations,” 314.

⁸¹ Elizabeth A. Cobbs, “Decolonization, the Cold War, and the Foreign Policy of the Peace Corps” *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1996), 98. Thomas Noer also argues that the Suez crisis was a key event in Washington’s decision to distance itself from the colonial powers. He adds to the list of reasons the growing civil rights movement in the United States and Nixon’s belief, after his 1957 visit to Africa, that American segregationist policies played into the hands of Communist propagandists and Nixon’s own presidential ambitions. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 48-49. Noer explains the importance of then Vice President Nixon in the new approach to African issues. Nixon, having attended Ghana’s independence ceremonies in March 1957, returned to the United States convinced that the United States

There were some substantive results from the changed position of the administration. After Vice President Nixon attended Ghana's Independence Day celebration and toured eleven other African nations in 1957, he recommended an increase in American aid to Africa. From 1957-1958, this happened as U.S. aid rose from \$36 million to \$93 million.⁸² In 1958, the Eisenhower Administration established the Bureau of African Affairs within the State Department, despite some congressional and State Department opposition. In the United Nations, the United States broke with precedence and began supporting resolutions critical of South Africa or those nations whose continued colonial policies violated the UN charter's commitment to self-determination

These actions did not represent a major departure from the earlier approach to Africa. The Bureau of African Affairs (AF) was staffed with Europeanists who were disgruntled at what they saw as a demotion. They undermined the new bureau's mission by continuing to use the former colonial powers as the diplomatic and economic intermediaries between Washington and the newly independent states.⁸³ Their actions, of

should support decolonization both materially, through economic assistance, and morally. He expressed these sentiments in his trip report to the President, calling for a series of changes in American policy toward Africa, especially efforts to counter the African viewpoint that American foreign policy reflected its racist domestic policies. *Ibid.*, 49.

⁸² Cobbs, "Decolonization, the Cold War, and the Foreign Policy of the Peace Corps," 98-99.

⁸³ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 49. Gibbs also discusses Washington's new interest in Africa in the late 1950s, noting that one should neither misunderstand nor exaggerate its extent. "Policy for Africa remained largely in the hands of the bureau of European affairs. Africa was given a low priority by the administration, because it was still thought of as a European concern, and the idea of independence was frowned upon." Gibbs, "Political Parties and International Relations," 315.

course, supported the neo-colonialist architecture imposed upon the former colonies by their respective metropolises – a system purposely designed to ensure their continued dependence. Moreover, the United States only supported UN resolutions that were most notable for their watered-down language which admonished, but stopped short of condemning, South Africa for its racial policies or Portugal for its continued colonialism

The Eisenhower Administration's negligible shift in its approach toward African issues was short-lived and was affected by two episodes of violence in Africa. The first occurred in March 1960. It began when South African police opened fire on a crowd of black South Africans in the town of Sharpeville, who had gathered to peacefully protest the passage of several new apartheid laws. In what is known as the Sharpeville massacre, sixty-nine blacks were killed, mostly by gunshot wounds to their backs, and over two hundred were wounded. According to historian Thomas Borstelmann, the event signaled a major turning point in South Africa's history as the blacks fought back. "The outraged black response led to the banning of political organizations opposed to apartheid...The ANC and other black groups went underground and took up weapons for the first time."⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 127. The Western press gave considerable coverage to the Sharpeville Massacre and the ensuing South African crackdown on dissident political organizations such as the ANC and the more radical Pan-Africanist Congress. Much of this coverage notably condemned the actions by South Africa and correctly assessed the counterproductive nature of its racial policies. See, for example, the Op Ed, "As Ye Sow," *The Washington Post*, March 23, 1960, sec. A, p. 14. In criticizing the government of Prime Minister Verwoerd, the brief editorial noted, in part, "An entire people cannot be kept in permanent subjugation and denied all outlets for peaceful redress without inviting exactly the kind of calamitous incident that has now occurred. Will the South African government have to learn the 'hard

This radicalization of parts of the black South African population worried Washington, whose response to the killing of innocents was lukewarm, at best. The American Ambassador to South Africa, Phillip Crowe, opined that the response of black Africans had created a dangerous revolutionary situation. The head of the CIA, Allen Dulles, worried that racial conflict would escalate, and that, as quoted by Borstelmann, “especially after the Congo becomes independent [in three months], there would be great opportunities for smuggling arms to the natives of South Africa.”⁸⁵

The threat of instability in pro-Western, anti-Communist South Africa brought out the private sentiments of the president and his closest foreign policy advisor, Secretary of State Christian Herter, John Foster Dulles’ successor. Mr. Herter was disconcerted when the State Department, without his approval, issued a statement of regret on the Sharpeville massacre.⁸⁶ After he discussed the press release with Eisenhower, the president told him to issue an official regret to the South African government, via

way’ that its policies are inviting the very violence it fears?” In one sense, perhaps the editorial was also criticizing the racial policies of the American government.

⁸⁵ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 147. The author cites the following primary sources for the comments by Crowe and Dulles: Crowe to State Department 30 March 1960, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1958-1960, 14: 747-748; Memo of NSC Meeting, 2 April 1960, Ann Whitman File (AWF), NSC Series, box 12, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

⁸⁶ The statement read in part, “The United States deplores violence in all its forms...While the United States, as a matter of practice, does not ordinarily comment on the internal affairs of governments with which it enjoys normal relations, it cannot help but regret the tragic loss of life resulting from measures taken against the demonstrators in South Africa.” Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960*, vol. XIV, *Africa*, “Editorial Note” (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1992), 741 (hereafter referred to as *FRUS*, vol. XIV, *Africa*). When Herter briefed President Eisenhower on March 24, he told the president that he had no prior knowledge of the statement and that “It occurred through internal failure within the State Department.” *Ibid.*, 741-742.

Ambassador Phillip Crowe in Capetown, adding, “This action should be kept secret.”

Eisenhower also told Herter “if it were his decision, he would find another post for the bureau Chief involved.”⁸⁷ Shortly thereafter, in a conversation with Prime Minister Harold Macmillan of Great Britain, Eisenhower expressed his sympathy for the plight of the South African whites and “their ‘difficult social and political problem’; it reminded the president of his good wishes for his ‘friends in Atlanta on some of their difficulties.’”⁸⁸

Eisenhower’s racist predilections, perhaps derived in part from the long periods of time he spent in the south while advancing through the Army rank structure, probably influenced his thinking on the Sharpville massacre and South Africa. However, as noted by Borstelmann, the president also gave due consideration to white South Africa’s intrinsic value to American power, which included U.S. strategic and economic interests and plans for a new missile tracking station in South Africa. Eisenhower’s closest advisors at State and the CIA apprised him that the apartheid regime was not about to crumble, nor would for the foreseeable future. Despite Sharpville, then, the United States “chose to maintain its close relationship with the masters of apartheid.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibid., 742.

⁸⁸ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 127. The author cites the following primary sources: *FRUS*, 1958-1960, 14: 741 (State Department, Eisenhower, Herter); Memo of Conversation, 28 March 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, 14: 746 (Eisenhower to Macmillan).

⁸⁹ Ibid., 128.

The second outbreak of violence in Africa that caught the president's attention followed the 30 June 1960 independence of the Belgian Congo. Ill prepared for self-governance by the colonial policies of Belgium, the country quickly devolved into instability, chaos, and near civil war among competing factions. Mineral-rich Katanga, under the leadership of the pro-Western and Belgian-supported Moïse Tshombe, seceded immediately after independence. The nationalist Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, whose primary objective was to keep the newly independent nation unified, opposed the secession.

Early on, State Department officials in both Washington and the Congo evaluated Lumumba as a neutral, non-Communist, African opportunist and the best alternative in the chaos-wracked nation to lead a national government.⁹⁰ However, he quickly became demonized when he demonstrated his willingness to call on the Soviet Union to expel the Belgian forces from Katanga after the United Nations had refused to send its forces into the secessionist state. At a National Security Council meeting in late July, for example, the CIA's Allen Dulles called Lumumba "a Castro or worse" who "has been bought by

⁹⁰ The American Embassy in Leopoldville (Kinshasa), for example, called Lumumba "an opportunist and not a Communist...who from very beginning has stood for unity of Congo." At the same time, the embassy also warned against American or Belgian recognition of Katanga, which would "tempt Lumumba to look to the Russians or other bloc countries" for assistance in putting down the secession. *FRUS*, vol. XVI, *Africa*, "Telegram from the Embassy in the Congo (McIlvaine) to the Department of State," July 26, 1960, 356.

the Communists.’”⁹¹ Ambassador Timberlake, in Leopoldville (Kinshasa), expressed similar sentiments, labeling the prime minister, “Lumumbavitch.”⁹² In August, Eisenhower ordered that Lumumba be removed.

The Eisenhower Administration, along with Belgium, supported the Katanga secession. It justified this position by labeling Lumumba as a Communist and alleging that he had opened the door to Soviet penetration. As David Gibbs argues, however, there is very little evidence to suggest that the prime minister was a Communist or that the Soviet Union sought to control the Congo. Moreover, Lumumba asked for American and United Nations assistance in putting down the secession movement several weeks before he accepted Soviet assistance.⁹³ Anti-Communism, then, does not adequately explain Washington’s support for Tshombe’s breakaway region. Gibbs argues that the American position is largely explained by economic factors. Several high-ranking officials in the administration, including Christian Herter, his Under Secretary, C. Douglas Dillon, and Secretary of Defense, Thomas S. Gates, Jr., had important financial stakes in seeing an independent Katanga. At the time of the rebellion, these business interests paralleled those of the Belgians. Given the same economic interests, the United

⁹¹ *FRUS*, vol. XIV, *Africa*, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 452d Meeting of the National Security Council,” July 21, 1960, 338-339.

⁹² Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 129.

⁹³ David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 99.

States supported Belgium policy. In contrast, “Patrice Lumumba opposed the Belgians, and the USA sought to overthrow him.”⁹⁴

The record of the Eisenhower Administration’s policy toward Africa, then, despite a brief interest in Africa in the late 1950s, including a temporary departure from its previous unconditional support for European colonialism, returned to form after the Congo erupted in violence and disorder in mid-1960.⁹⁵ Coming on the heels of Sharpsville, the crisis in the Congo revitalized the belief that white dominion was the only way to ensure stability and protect American interests in the region. This attitude was reinforced by South Africa, Rhodesia and Portugal. All three were quick to capitalize on the Congo violence in pointing out that only they were capable of insuring the continued

⁹⁴ Ibid., 101. Thomas Borstelmann expands the reasons for the Eisenhower Administration’s distaste for Lumumba to include what many officials believed were the prime minister’s eccentricities and his ingratitude toward the Belgians. They (and Belgian officials) variously portrayed Lumumba as irrational, insane, and a dope fiend and sorcerer. The author also argues that racism contributed to the unsavory portrait, abetted by news reports that detailed the killing and raping of white women by mutinous black soldiers. White House and State Department officials were preoccupied with this issue and Eisenhower came to dislike Lumumba more than he disliked Egyptian President Nasser. In August, with about 100 Soviet and Czech technicians and Communist-bloc equipment arriving in Leopoldville, Eisenhower apparently ordered Lumumba’s removal during a National Security Council meeting. Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 129-131. On this same subject, see Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*, 40-41.

⁹⁵ Washington’s reversion to its previous pro-colonialism stance was manifestly evident in late 1960 when it decided to abstain, along with Great Britain, France, Portugal, and South Africa, along with four others, on a UN General Assembly resolution denouncing colonialism and calling for its “speedy and unconditional end...in all its forms and manifestations.” Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*, 30. The American UN representative, John Wadsworth, urged the president to support the resolution, pointing out that over forty African and Asian nations had sponsored it. The president was more swayed by Prime Minister Macmillan, who asked that the United States abstain, and by his desire not to provoke the Portuguese. The resolution, however, did pass. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 59. For a Soviet perspective on the important vote on UN Resolution 1514, “UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples,” which the Soviet Union helped to draft and endorsed, see Oleg Ignatyev, *Secret Weapon in Africa*, trans. David Fidlon (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 8.

stability necessary for exploitation of the region's valuable mineral resources and keeping the Communists at bay.⁹⁶ As noted by Thomas Noer, "The Congo...gave new credence to the claims of Lisbon, Salisbury, and Pretoria that they were the only safeguards against violence, tribal warfare, and radicalism."⁹⁷

The administration's pro-white stance, however, did not escape the scrutiny of the newly emerging nations in Africa and their friends elsewhere in the Third World. By 1960, "The Year of Africa," they formed a potent voting bloc intent on completing the liberation struggle through increased pressure on the remaining bastions of white rule. It also helped cement the African perception that the United States was the preeminent supporter of the colonial and neo-colonial world. This perception, which was real enough, thwarted American efforts to gain Third World support in its global competition

⁹⁶ They were not the only ones to point this out. I surveyed a number of American press reports on the first few weeks of the Congo violence and found that most of them approached sensationalism in their reporting. Almost all emphasized the killing of whites by blacks, which, in fact, was much less than the killing of blacks by other blacks or by whites. In the midst of this biased journalism, after Lumumba's request to the Soviet Union, came such articles as Stanley Johnson, "Khrushchev Denies Right of U.S. to Keep Reds out of this Hemisphere," *Washington Post/Times Herald*, July 13, 1960, sec. A, p. 15. The article conflated two very different dynamics – black violence following independence and Soviet interest in Africa – into a single, overarching theme: that black-on-white violence proved what the white minorities in southern Africa had been saying all along. Blacks were incapable of civilized behavior, including self-government, and because of their backwardness, they were especially susceptible to Communist influence.

⁹⁷ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 58. According to Noer, by the spring of 1960, even before the outbreak of violence in the Congo, Eisenhower had already begun to reverse the brief, but at least symbolically positive, shift toward black Africa. As he recounts, the president stopped off briefly in Lisbon on his way to the Paris summit meeting with Khrushchev (subsequently aborted). During his two-day visit to Portugal, the president talked with Portuguese President Antonio de Oliveira Salazar. "The president rejected suggestions from his aides that he raise the issue of decolonization of Portugal's African territories. Instead he publicly praised Lisbon's 'civilizing mission' in Africa and claimed 'there are no great problems between the United States and Portugal.'" Ibid.

with the Soviet Union. The Kremlin, portraying itself as the friend and patron of the global liberation struggle, consistently supported international efforts aimed at finally ending colonialism in all its forms.⁹⁸

The Kennedy Reversal: American Support for African Nationalism

John Kennedy's election to the presidency in 1960 brought a fresh approach to American relations with the new nations and liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. Years before the Kennedy election campaign had officially begun, his own and other voices criticizing American policy in Africa had become an irritant in the Eisenhower White House.⁹⁹ In 1960, during the campaign, this criticism was especially troublesome to his opponent, Vice President Nixon. The young Senator from Massachusetts, whose interest in Africa and support for African nationalism dated from at least 1957, adeptly linked America's continuing domestic racial problems with the administration's support for the racist white regimes in Africa. He used the issue to attack what he termed the failed Republican leadership at home and abroad. Nixon was obliged to support the Eisenhower record.

⁹⁸ The Soviet Union, for example, supported the MPLA, if only modestly until 1975, from the mid-1950s onward, and contributed money and supplies to the OAU's Liberation Committee in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, after its establishment in 1963.

⁹⁹ Most notable in outsider criticisms of Eisenhower's policies in Africa were those of future Kennedy appointees, Michigan Governor, G. Mennen Williams, and former ambassador to India and Connecticut Congressman, Chester Bowles.

As previously noted, Kennedy clearly recognized the significance of black nationalism sweeping through southern Africa. Despite this, his position on South Africa was essentially a continuation of past policies because of South Africa's staunch anti-Communism and the beneficial strategic and economic aspects of the American-South African relationship. The president and his spokesmen publicly chastised the South Africans on their domestic racial policies. However, American (and Western) policies helped sustain the South African system in the face of intense international condemnation and increasing UN resolutions calling for economic sanctions and an arms embargo. The United States refused to vote in favor of the former, while pre-empting the latter by unilaterally declaring its own partial arms embargo, in August 1963, before a crucial UN vote on the issue.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ The United States did vote for Security Council Resolution 181 calling for an end of arms sales to South Africa. However, it did so only after Adlai Stevenson had qualified the American vote by reiterating American opposition to economic sanctions and then announcing that the United States would implement its own partial embargo by the end of 1963. Moreover, he iterated that the United States would continue to honor its previous arms agreements with South Africa and reserve the right to alter its partial arms embargo if future circumstances warranted such a change. In effect, the United States retained an escape clause and viewed the UN arms embargo as "recommendatory" but not "mandatory," given the existence of the American partial embargo. The partial arms embargo was, according to Thomas Noer, "the major effort of the Kennedy administration to show its hatred of apartheid and its sympathy with the frustration of black Africa...It was neither total nor irreversible. While Kennedy and some of his advisers saw it as a dramatic new step, it was also a conservative gambit to avoid more radical measures. Having ruled out economic sanctions, Kennedy was left with only the arms issue." Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 149. Thomas Borstelmann concurs with Noer's assessment of the effects of the American embargo, noting that the Kennedy Administration's "announcement of a unilateral partial arms embargo on South Africa in August 1963 symbolically disassociated the United States from the land of apartheid, while undermining the UN campaign for a more severe embargo and not materially damaging Verwoerd's military strength." Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 156.

The American decision to implement a partial arms embargo, perhaps a psychological victory for black Africans but a practical victory for the South African regime, reflected the strength of the traditional American foreign policy imperatives of maintaining stability and denying Communist influence in the region. Thomas Borstelmann succinctly summarized this continuing priority by noting, “The Kennedy administration’s unwillingness to go beyond rhetorical condemnation of South Africa’s racial policies reflected its reluctance to encourage any destabilization of the Pretoria government in light of the political alternatives in the republic.”¹⁰¹

Despite the president’s reluctance to make the hard decisions on South Africa for fear of destabilizing the white regime, the new direction in African policy was evident in the administration’s actions toward Portuguese colonialism and the Congo. In regards to the former, for nearly the first two years of his presidency, Kennedy and his African advisors took a hard stance toward Portuguese colonialism, which put them at odds with many of the West Europeans. This time frame was notably bracketed on the front end by the American support, for the first time, of a March 1961 Security Council resolution calling for self-determination in the Portuguese African colonies and for the establishment of a committee to investigate the situation in Angola, which had erupted in violence in early February 1961 when several hundred black Angolans had stormed Luanda’s main

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 155.

prison.¹⁰² As to be expected, the Soviet Union also supported the resolution, which failed passage because of six abstentions, including the British and the French. Authors Michael A. Samuels and Stephen M. Haykin described the precedent-breaking significance of the American vote. “The American act rang out like a pistol shot and was interpreted as a repudiation of the position [abstention] taken in December, 1960 by the outgoing Eisenhower Administration on the question of anticolonialism.”¹⁰³

On the same day as the UN vote, March 15, the new administration further distanced itself from the previous administration’s policy of support for Western European colonial and neo-colonial policies towards Africa. In a policy statement previously approved by President Kennedy and Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, Francis W. Carpenter, a spokesman for the American UN delegation, said the United States “would pursue an independent policy on African problems.” Mr. Carpenter further noted, “Our allies were

¹⁰² The 15 March 1961 UN vote, ironically, came on the same day that widespread violence broke out in northern Angola, signifying the beginning of the Angolan rebellion against the Portuguese.

¹⁰³ Samuels and Haykin, “The Anderson Plan,” 653. The American vote was severely criticized by the Portuguese press, no doubt encouraged by the Salazar regime. As reported by the Associated Press, for example, the Lisbon newspaper *Diario da Manhã* “said the United States had lined up ‘with the Reds against a partner that is on the same side in the battlefield. It was an act of stupidity.’” “U.S. Confirms African Policy,” *Santa Ana Register*, 18 March 1961, 3. Following the March 1961 vote, the American UN Ambassador, Adlai E. Stevenson, voted for three succeeding resolutions, two from the General Assembly and one from the Security Council, dealing with the Angolan situation and calling for an end to colonialism. As in the March vote, the United States again sided with the Soviet Union against its NATO partner, Portugal. However, on all four resolutions, the American delegation successfully urged that all references to the provisions of Chapter 7 of the UN Charter be deleted from the resolutions. Chapter 7 called for an arms embargo and economic sanctions against any country that, because of its actions, represented a threat to international peace and security. The American representatives, led by Stevenson, insisted this situation was not applicable in the case of Portuguese colonialism. Portugal, however, did not appreciate the American success in moderating the resolutions’ language.

informed in advance. We have a deep and continuing common interest with them. The difficulty and complexity of African questions are, however, such that there are and may continue to be differences in approach in some of them.”¹⁰⁴

The other notable break with the West Europeans came with Kennedy’s policy in the Congo. The administration staunchly supported, in words and actions, a United Nations military buildup in the new nation to destroy Tshombe’s power and crush the Katangan secession. This action undermined not only Belgium’s efforts in support of the rebellion, but also ran counter to British, French, Portuguese, and South African covert support for Katanga. As David Gibbs notes, however, this break with the Western allies “led to a substantial increase in US influence in central Africa...US officials became close advisers to the Congolese government, especially after General Joseph Mobutu seized power in 1965.” Increased American influence was also felt elsewhere in central Africa as Washington encouraged and subsidized investment in the underdeveloped nations in the region.¹⁰⁵

This distancing from European colonialism and neo-colonialism, however, had its limits. At the end of the twenty-two month period of American support for self-

¹⁰⁴ “U.S. Confirms African Policy,” *Santa Ana Register*, 18 March 1961, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Gibbs, “Political Parties and International Relations,” 323-324. According to the author, the United States provided about half of the funds for the UN force, giving Washington a major voice in the Congo operation. With the United States’ support, the multinational force attacked and defeated Katanga’s army in late 1962-early 1963, and Katanga was reintegrated. *Ibid.*, 324.

determination in Portugal's colonies, Washington shifted course. In December 1962, it voted against two Security Council anti-colonialism resolutions. The first called for self-determination and independence for Angola, then the only Portuguese colony facing a black nationalist revolt. The second included economic sanctions and an arms embargo against the Portuguese. The American votes came on the eve of the expiration of the American lease of military facilities in the Azores, scheduled to run out on 31 December 1962. They were apparently designed to appease the Portuguese who remained intransigent on both the colonial question and renewal of the base lease.

Within this nearly two-year time frame, however, there were notable gains made for the cause of liberation for Portugal's colonies. These included: the number of "yes" votes on support for Angolan independence; the official beginning of support for Holden Roberto and Eduardo Mondlane in Angola and Mozambique, respectively;¹⁰⁶ the

¹⁰⁶ According to Leslie Gelb of the *New York Times*, American support for Holden Roberto dated to 1962 when "President Kennedy determined that Portugal...could not sustain control over her African colonies indefinitely and that contact must be made with future revolutionary leaders. On the advice of the CIA, among others, Mr. Roberto, the brother-in-law of General Mobutu, was selected as a future leader of Angola." Leslie Gelb, "U.S., Soviets, China Reported Aiding Portugal, Angola," 22. See also Seymour Hersh, "Early Angola Aid by U.S. Reported, 14. However, as documented in the Portuguese Africa sections of the *Foreign Relations of the United States*, American aid to Roberto actually went back earlier than the "1962" date given by journalists Gelb and Hersh, as well as others. On May 23, 1961, for example, following the outbreak of violence in northern Angola in March 1961, which was instigated by Holden Roberto's Union of the People's of Angola (UPA - the predecessor to the FNLA), the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research wrote, "Regarding the background of this issue, it is true that the Union des Populations d'Angola (UPA) was involved in the recent terrorism and that the Agency has been giving Holden Roberto, the leader of the UPA, financial assistance *for some years*" (author's accent). The State Department letter then added, "the Department first learned of this connection last March when the Agency raised with the Department the question as to whether it would be in the U.S.

imposition of a partial arms embargo against the Portuguese, which prohibited the use of American-supplied arms in the African colonies that had been provided for sole use in the NATO mission area; increased public criticism of Portuguese colonialism; and early attempts by administration officials to pull or prod Portugal towards decolonization through economic inducements, but always with the understanding that its recognition of self determination for its colonies did not necessarily mean their complete break with the metropole. A brief discussion of these efforts follows.

Washington Tries to Buy Portuguese Decolonization

There were two serious attempts during the Kennedy Administration to economically entice Lisbon's acceptance of eventual self-determination for its African colonies. The first was a January 1962 nine-point plan prepared by Paul Sakwa of the CIA. His recommendations featured an immense economic plan for both colonial and metropolitan development and modernization and American political backing for Holden Roberto and Eduardo Mondlane to groom them as future prime ministers of their respective governments in Angola and Mozambique. In turn, the plan called upon the Portuguese to allow the establishment of colonial political parties by 1965 and a referendum by 1967 in

interest to support the UPA itself." Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. XXI, *Africa*, "Letter from the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)," May 23, 1961 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995), 543. The State Department's letter is also interesting in that it demonstrates that its own intelligence division did not know about the activities of the CIA until several years after it had established a relationship with Roberto and that the black insurgents, despite the Kennedy Administration's avowed sympathy with the liberation struggles, were deemed to be "terrorists."

which both the black and white populations would participate. The referendum would provide the opportunity for the electorate to choose their future relationship with Portugal, including full independence to be granted by 1970.

Sakwa apparently based his plan on several previous, but less-detailed, proposals by Burke Elbrick, the American Ambassador to Portugal. Unlike Elbrick's plan, however, Sakwa, a former head of the CIA's clandestine operations in Vietnam, called for American contacts with the then growing moderate civilian and military opposition to Salazar with the idea of encouraging them to overthrow the government if it refused to consider the gradual decolonization proposal.¹⁰⁷

Sakwa's plan was considered and rejected, primarily because the Kennedy Administration was averse to considering the covert overthrow of a NATO ally, although the NSC approved a similar plan, sans the proposed CIA-instigated revolt. The president relayed the contents of this plan to Salazar in March 1962, but the Prime Minister rejected it during a visit by Dean Rusk to Lisbon in late June 1962. Salazar did, however, agree to begin negotiations on the Azores base facilities, perhaps to derail the prospect of any more such proposals coming his way.

Six months later, in January 1963, Chester Bowles, now the president's special advisor on Asian, African, and Latin American Affairs, proposed a program of economic

¹⁰⁷ The Sakwa Plan is discussed in detail in Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*, 39-41, and Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 86-88.

inducements, not unlike that of the rejected Sakwa plan. Bowles' "Proposal for a Breakthrough in U.S.-Portuguese Relations in Regard to Africa," called for American, NATO, and Organization for European Cooperation and Development (OECD) political and economic support for development and modernization in the colonies and Portugal, proposed a five-year transition period leading to self-determination in the African territories, and required that Portugal recognize African leaders, both inside and outside the colonies, as legitimate contenders for political power.¹⁰⁸ The president rejected Bowles' plan, but his ideas, and some of those embodied in the earlier Sakwa proposal, later appear in modified form in the 1965 Anderson Plan, proposed by the then American ambassador to Portugal, Admiral George W. Anderson (and discussed later in this chapter).

The American efforts to purchase a Portuguese commitment to gradual decolonization, embodied in both the Sakwa and Bowles plan, embraced the idea that self-determination did not necessarily mean automatic independence, and that a plebiscite within each of Portugal's colonies would determine the future status of their relationship with Lisbon. The lengthy transition period proposed in the American plans, with an emphasis on the inclusion and development of what the Americans believed to be moderate political forces (i.e., Holden Roberto and Eduardo Mondlane) suggested that whatever the

¹⁰⁸ The Bowles proposal, submitted to President Kennedy for consideration on January 10, 1963, is detailed in Samuels and Haykin, "The Anderson Plan," 650-657.

outcome of the referendum - independent countries governed by pro-Western leaders, or continued Portuguese hegemony through a commonwealth or confederation - would serve the American interest in directing and managing the forces of change, in preserving stability, and in countering Communist efforts to increase their influence on the continent.

Washington's attempts to induce the Portuguese to "associate itself publicly with 'a reasonable concept of self-determination,'" failed to shake the determination of the Lisbon government to hold on to its territories.¹⁰⁹ The economic rewards were great, up to one billion dollars over five years as proposed in the Bowles plan, but neither plan took into account the psychological dimensions of the Portuguese claim on its colonies. As noted by Samuels and Haykin, "The African territories were the heart of the Portuguese Empire. The global distribution of the colonies and their economic resources were the major, perhaps the only, signs of the significance of Portugal in the modern world. To abandon the African colonies would mortally wound Portugal's heritage and responsibility."¹¹⁰ Moreover, as observed by John Marcum, "Above all, Portugal,

¹⁰⁹ Samuels and Haykin, "The Anderson Plan," 660.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 652.

through its ruling elite, was committed to the pursuit of a Eurafrican ‘mission’ which alone gave it the status of something more than a minor Iberian power.”¹¹¹

The plans also underestimated what Salazar and his ruling elite considered to be a workable time frame for the political and economic development of its colonies. Samuels and Haykin noted that Salazar believed there was no need for a rush towards self-determination as the Americans desired, since time was on Portugal’s side. “After a discussion with Salazar, George Ball ‘was struck that the Portuguese have a wholly different time sense about the problem than do we; Salazar spoke in terms of fifty years for developments that we would envisage coming in ten or even five years.’”¹¹²

Further, there were no indications that the black African nationalist leaders and their African supporters would accept anything other than immediate and full independence. Both the Sakwa and Bowles plans assumed they could be convinced to participate in gradual decolonization, which meant, among other things, a cessation of guerrilla activities and a general African consensus for the process. The basis of such an assumption seems to have been wishful thinking. While the United States and Portugal may have agreed upon the definition of self-determination, the African nationalists equated it only with full independence, as indicated in an early November 1963 meeting

¹¹¹ John A. Marcum, “The Politics of Indifference: Portugal and Africa, A Case Study in American Foreign Policy,” *East African Studies V* (Syracuse: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, 1972), 5.

¹¹² Samuels and Haykin, “The Anderson Plan,” 652.

between President Kennedy, George Ball and other State Department representatives and Portuguese Foreign Minister Franco Nogueira. The latter “said the Portuguese government defined self-determination in the same manner as did the United States government. If there were to be true self-determination all options should be open including independence. Self-determination as defined by the Africans is not self-determination at all as it is limited only to independence.”¹¹³

Finally, the plans avoided the real reason why the Portuguese could so easily reject them, or any blueprint suggesting an end to their civilizing mission – they still retained the Azores, their ace up the sleeve. They knew that the American military establishment coveted the American base facilities at Lajes airfield. Indeed, the Joint Chiefs were consistent in their arguments that the United States not sacrifice its strategic interests in the islands on the altar of moral principles. The JCS stated its opinion clearly in July 1963. “In order to protect vital US strategic military interests in the Azores and avoid further weakening of the NATO alliance, the United States should resist the institution of strong measures against Portugal.”¹¹⁴ The military chiefs, supported by their Europeanist

¹¹³ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. XXI, *Africa*, “Memorandum of Conversation, Portuguese African Problems,” November 7, 1963, 581.

¹¹⁴ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, US Policy Toward Portugal and Republic of South Africa*, JCSM-528-63 (10 July 1963), p. 3 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archives (South Africa Collection). The American military use of facilities in the Azores, primarily at the Lajes airfield on the island of Terceira, dated back to 1944 when it was used as a refueling site for American cargo planes carrying supplies to the Middle East, Pakistan and China and for aircraft involved in protecting the shipping lanes between Europe and the United States. In the post-war

allies in the State Department and elsewhere, maintained this position, even though their superior in the chain of command, Defense Secretary McNamara, believed it was “possible to live without the Azores base and that it should not dictate our foreign policy.”¹¹⁵

Kennedy clearly recognized the leverage the Azores base agreement gave the Portuguese. According to Kennedy Special Council, Ted Sorensen, at least early in his administration, the president was prepared to give up the base to get the Azores monkey off his back once and for all. Sorensen relates that following the American support in

period, a series of agreements under the title “The Supplementary Agreement for Defense,” established a permanent American military presence in the Azores and allowed for NATO, as well as American, use of the base. The third renewal of these serial agreements, the one that plagued the Kennedy Administration, ran from 15 November 1957 to 31 December 1962. Salazar refused to renew the agreement because he recognized the leverage it provided him over the American posture towards Portuguese colonialism. It was extended for one year, from 1 January 1963 to 1 January 1964, but on a de facto basis with the Portuguese only obligated to give the United States a six-month notice of expulsion. During the one-year extension, the American government asked permission from the Portuguese to install the Loran-C navigational system in the islands. Portugal was slow to respond to these requests because, as noted by the CIA, they preferred to “use this as a point of pressure to persuade the US to ease off on the colonial issue.” Central Intelligence Agency, *Special Memorandum No. 9-64, Salazar’s Current Prospects*, June 8, 1964, p. 6 [database on-line]; available from www.foia.cia.gov. The de facto use of the facilities continued until the early Nixon Administration. Nixon and Kissinger’s favorable posture toward Portugal and the colonial issue led to renegotiations and the conclusion of a new agreement extending to February 3, 1974.

¹¹⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. XXIV, *Africa*, “Memorandum for the Record, Meeting of 4 May 1964 re U.S. Policy toward the Portuguese Possessions in Africa,” May 4, 1964 [database on-line]; available from www.state.gov. The strictly military perspective of the JCS led them to somewhat exaggerate the importance of the Azores. As pointed out to President Kennedy by Special Council Sorensen, “letting the agreement lapse might be less of a disaster than paying too high a price for its renewal...And for the duration of the NATO Treaty, the U.S. would retain the right of transit for aircraft engaged in NATO missions and the right, in the event of war in Europe, to full use of the base under Portuguese maintenance, including its use for stockpiling needed supplies. In short, it would be hard for any critic to say we had weakened our security by ‘giving up’ our rights to use this base.” “Memorandum to the President from Theodore C. Sorensen, Azores – Angola,” June 4, 1962, p. 1 [Database on-line]; available from Declassified Documents Reference System.

early 1961 for UN resolutions criticizing Portuguese colonialism, "...the Portuguese thereafter tried every form of diplomatic blackmail to alter our position on Angola, using as a wedge our country's expiring lease on a key military base on the Portuguese Azores Islands. The President finally felt that, if necessary, he was prepared to forgo the base entirely rather than permit Portugal to dictate his African policy."¹¹⁶

Despite these sentiments, Kennedy's position regarding Portugal and her colonies was affected by the lapsing Azores agreement, especially as the American-Soviet tensions over Berlin heated up in 1961 and the military chiefs and Europeanists in his administration emphasized the importance of the Azores to the defense of Western Europe. While the new president did have a strong affinity for Africa and Africans, was quick to exhibit his positive sentiments through official and unofficial methods and channels, and was able to affect a more Afro-centric approach in American policy from early 1961 until late 1962, more pressing international matters affecting the Cold War balance eventually moderated his progressive approach toward African issues.

The Johnson Administration: Return to Passive Neglect

Lyndon B. Johnson gave much less attention to African affairs, especially those concerning the Portuguese colonies, than did his predecessor. During the first eighteen months of Johnson's presidency, other international events focused his attention

¹¹⁶ Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 538.

elsewhere, most notably the situation in Vietnam where, in early 1965, the president authorized a major increase in the American force level. Thereafter, Johnson would be consumed by defeating the Communist challenge in Asia while trying to implement major domestic reforms. Public criticism of white rule in Africa did continue. However, as noted by Samuels and Haykin, “the potency of American anticolonial policy declined,” and as observed by a senior official in the Portuguese Foreign Ministry at the time, “the Johnson administration was not as involved or as persistent as the Kennedy administration on Portuguese colonial policy.”¹¹⁷

In its policy toward South Africa, the administration continued the Kennedy-imposed partial arms embargo against the Republic of South Africa, but the oversight effort to ensure compliance with the embargo’s restrictions was spotty, at best. As noted by Kenneth Mokoena, the American government essentially turned a blind eye to violations of the embargo. These included transactions through third countries via partially or wholly owned American subsidiaries, illegal direct corporate sales, and the guise of declaring equipment, such as transport planes, helicopters, and communications and computer systems as “dual use,” thereby violating at least the spirit of the partial embargo.¹¹⁸ At the same time, while blocking American naval participation in exercises with the South African Navy and prohibiting U.S. Navy ships from visiting South

¹¹⁷ Samuels and Haykin, “The Anderson Plan,” 659.

¹¹⁸ Mokoena, *South Africa and the United States*, xxii.

African ports, a somewhat superficial nod to the American policy of opposing apartheid, trade and investment in the Republic continued unabated, as did nuclear power collaboration and intelligence cooperation.¹¹⁹

The administration's policy towards Portugal was generally helpful to Lisbon's colonialism, despite an American vote for a Security Council resolution in December 1963 calling for self-determination in Angola. As directed by the White House, Ambassador Stevenson was able to moderate the language of the resolution, which originally condemned Portugal and called for economic sanctions, to one that simply criticized Portugal without reference to economic sanctions. This was, however, the Johnson Administration's last support for UN actions criticizing Lisbon's colonial policies. It demonstrated that some of the remaining Africanists in the administration, including G. Mennen Williams and Ambassador Stevenson, still retained some, if declining, influence within the White House.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., xxi. The United States government also continued to condemn the racial policies of Rhodesia and following the British lead, in 1966 voted for UN economic sanctions against the Salisbury government of Ian Smith after it declared its independence from the UK in November 1965. According to Thomas Noer, the United States enforced these sanctions better than most, including Great Britain. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 237. Also, in an act of support for landlocked Zambia, which closed its borders to Rhodesia following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), thereby severely affecting its own economic situation, the Johnson Administration joined a British-led airlift to bring oil to Zambia. Generally, during the Johnson Administration, the United States' policy toward Rhodesia fell into lock step with that of the British. However, during most of 1966, there were strains in the alliance as the United States came to believe that Great Britain's policy was too inconsistent and that the United States needed to take more of an independent stance on the Rhodesian issue after allegations surfaced in the UN that American foreign policy was being made in London. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 213. Despite these tensions, as noted by Noer, "America demonstrated its solidarity with Great Britain. Even though the 'special relationship' was often strained, it did endure." Ibid., 237

During the Johnson era, reports detailing Portuguese use of American weapons in their African colonies, which had begun after Kennedy's imposition of the restrictive arms embargo of 1961, rose to new levels. This was especially true after Zambia's independence in late 1964. President Kenneth Kaunda granted sanctuary to both the MPLA and FLNA within its territory from which both carried out operations into eastern Angola. Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) also joined in these so-called eastern front operations following its establishment in 1966. The increasing accusations of Portuguese use of American weaponry in Angola, documented by reports from the government of Zambia following several cross-border incidents by the Portuguese military, was probably a result of the American government's lack of concern either with pressuring the Portuguese to cease their use or with monitoring the partial arms embargo, or both.¹²⁰

In fact, a widely publicized incident involving the planned transfer of an alleged twenty refurbished and refitted WWII B-26 bombers to Portugal for use in Africa

¹²⁰ See, for example, Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. XXIV, *Africa*, "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Zambia, Angola-Zambian Border Incident." July 27, 1966 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov>. This lengthy message details a Zambian complaint to the American Ambassador in Lusaka that two spent shells with American markings were found in a destroyed Zambian village near the Angolan border. Part of the State Department's response demonstrated the ambiguity of the Johnson Administration's posture toward the arms embargo. The message stated, "as long as exile military activity against Angola based in Zambia continues, retaliatory attacks bound take place," and questioned whether the Zambian report had been accurate in stating that the incident actually took place inside Zambia. Further, it continued, "Even if item determined be of US origin there no way we could establish who had possession or how it had been obtained." Ibid.

suggests that the American government, or at least the CIA, had at least on one occasion actually participated in the direct transfer of American war materiel in flagrant violation of the arms embargo. “Operation Sparrow,” allegedly the Government code name for the escapade, surfaced when British pilot, John Richard Hawke, and one of his accomplices, a French aircraft broker by the name of Henri Marie Francois de Marin de Montmarin, were arrested in Miami in September 1965 by American customs officials. They were tried a year later in Buffalo, NY, on charges of violating the Munitions Control Act since they were operating without the necessary State Department approved export license. A third individual, naturalized American Gregory R. Board, the owner of Tucson-based Aero Associates and the individual who actually contracted for the delivery of the bombers, conveniently fled the country and was never apprehended.

During the trial, CIA witnesses called by the defense attorney denied the agency’s participation in the plan, despite both Hawke’s and de Montmarin’s contention that they were hired by the CIA. As reported by David Welsh, a writer for *Ramparts* magazine, the arrest of Hawke and de Montmarin, after they had already delivered seven of the bombers, was nothing more than a scapegoat ploy by the American government. Their apprehension came on the eve of the fall 1965 session of the UN General Assembly during which the Portuguese colonial issue was to be a leading item on the agenda. Thus, as Welsh noted, “Washington had good cause to be worried. The U.S. delegation knew

that this time, the attacks of African nations and the Soviet bloc would be directed not only at Portugal, but at those nations supplying Portugal with arms... Their arrest as ‘private smugglers’ was immediately seized upon by our U.N. delegation as evidence of American innocence in the Portuguese African wars.” Further, Welsh concluded, “It is perhaps not a coincidence, either, that the trial was scheduled to open this fall (a year after the arrests) simultaneously with the convening of the General Assembly, at which the question of Portuguese Africa was again expected to figure prominently.”¹²¹

The Johnson Administration’s more sympathetic approach toward the Portuguese government did not prevent State Department officials from trying, yet again, to force Portugal’s hand on the colonial issue through various plans. The first of these attempts, which G. Mennen Williams proposed in April 1964, called for American clandestine support for a nationalist non-violent political action program both within and outside the African territories. This was Williams’ last hurrah (he and the administration parted ways in 1966, but by early 1964, his “Africa for the Africans” voice had already been muted), and it proved to be illusionary. It presumed extensive cooperation between the MPLA and FNLA and, ultimately, between the Africans and Portugal. It also was somewhat naïve in thinking that the liberation movements, committed to the forcible

¹²¹ David Welsh, “Flyboys of the CIA, *Ramparts*, 11-18 December 1966, 18. The Buffalo jury acquitted both men. See also “Bomber Pilot Charges CIA Involved in Illegal Exports,” *Orange County Register*, October 10, 1966, sec. B, p. 9.

overthrow of the Portuguese since 1961 in Angola, 1963 in Guinea-Bissau, and 1964 in Mozambique, would now agree to a form of passive resistance. Finally, even if the nationalists did agree to a non-violent path to self-determination, there was little hope that the Portuguese would come to terms with the movements' leadership.¹²²

To sell his plan to the Cold Warriors in the administration, Williams emphasized that the nationalist movements were becoming more radicalized and were admitting more extremists and pro-Communists elements into their organizations. Thus, "The most immediate problem in the overall issue is... to try to prevent the nationalists from mortgaging their future to the Communists and from reaching a stage where they will no longer be disposed to negotiate a moderate and evolutionary settlement when Portugal finally comes around to offering one."¹²³

¹²² In a report in June 1964, in fact, the CIA estimated that since the short-term outlook for continued Portuguese control over its colonies had improved considerably since the uprisings began in Angola in 1961, it was doubtful that Salazar "will ever publicly agree to genuine self-determination for the overseas territories." While noting that the "long-range prognosis for Portugal's African territories remains questionable," the Agency estimated, "the present indications are that Dr. Salazar will have a good deal more time to play out his hand than most observers were willing to give him a year or two ago." Central Intelligence Agency, "Special Memorandum No. 9-64, Salazar's Current Prospects," June 8, 1964, 4, pp. 10-11 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov>. Williams' plan for non-violent political action is set out in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. XXIV, *Africa*, "Action Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (William) to Secretary of State Rusk," April 29, 1964 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov>.

¹²³ Ibid. Williams may be referring here, in part, to the defection of the MPLA's Viriato da Cruz, allegedly a pro-Chinese nationalist, to the FNLA, and Roberto's decision in January 1964, which he conveniently made public, to accept support from Communist nations, most notably both the Soviet Union and China. In fact, China allegedly agreed to provide some arms to Roberto's movement, but Prime Minister Tshombe blocked the weapons from reaching Roberto. On Viriato da Cruz' defection to the FNLA, see J. Anthony Lukas, "Angola Rebel Front Grants Membership to Pro-China Group," *New York Times*, April 23, 1964, 2.

The 303 Committee (the forerunner of the Forty Committee, a high-level inter-departmental organization established to consider clandestine operations) considered the plan in early May 1964. Thomas Noer remarks that it was subsequently allowed, “to die the slow bureaucratic death of postponement and inaction.”¹²⁴ This was only partially true, because the 303 Committee recommended that the plan be presented to Prime Minister Adoula of the Congo (Leopoldville), the principal patron of Holden Roberto and his FNLA. Depending on Adoula’s response, further discussions on the Williams plan might follow.¹²⁵

The re-eruption of violence in the Congo, in June 1964 following the departure of UN peacekeeping forces, hastened the demise of Williams’ plan and the 303 Committee’s recommendations. With the country in disarray, Prime Minister Adoula resigned. In early July, Moise Tshombe became prime minister at the request of President

On Roberto’s public announcement to seek aid from Communist nations, see “Angolan Rebels to Take Red Aid,” *New York Times*, January 4, 1964, 15; “Congo to Rule Aid to Angola Rebels,” *New York Times*, January 8, 1964, 4; J. Anthony Lewis, “Adoula Cautions Angolan Rebels,” *New York Times*, March 23, 1964, 10.

¹²⁴ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 117.

¹²⁵ *Foreign Relation of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. XXIV, *Africa*, “Memorandum for the Record, Meeting of 4 May 1964 re U.S. Policy toward the Portuguese Possessions in Africa,” May 4, 1964 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov>. The exact wording of the committee’s recommendation to test the African response to the Williams plan has been sanitized, but “reading between the lines,” the reader gets the impression that probably Holden Roberto and perhaps Eduardo Mondlane were also to be approached, via American diplomats in Africa, for their comments on the plan. The 303 Committee concluded its recommendation by stating, “Depending on their responses, additional steps for covert discussions and support could be initiated.” *Ibid*.

Kasavubu.¹²⁶ Now, the nation faced another series of spontaneous rebellions against the man who, according to Thomas Borstelmann, was “perhaps the most hated black political figure in Africa.”¹²⁷

While the United States had been instrumental in crushing Tshombe’s Katanga rebellion during the Kennedy Administration, the violent events of mid-1964 changed Washington’s thinking. As noted by Thomas Borstelmann, the CIA informed President Johnson, “‘Should Tshombe fall, ‘the prospects are dark.’”¹²⁸ The agency’s dire predictions for an increase in extremism, chaos and even secessionist movements breaking off from the central government persuaded President Johnson that it was in the American interest to assist the Tshombe government, along with Belgium, in reestablishing control over the country. However, the president did not foresee the consequences of associating itself with Africa’s “Uncle Tom,” and his neocolonial supporters, the Belgians.

American involvement in this latest Congo crisis reached its apex in late 1964 when a rebel force attacked Stanleyville (now called Kisangani) in the northeastern Congo and seized a number of white civilian hostages, including five Americans. Belgian

¹²⁶ Gibbs argues that Kasavubu’s decision to bring Tshombe back resulted from pressure from Belgian companies who believed their economic interests would be protected under his leadership. Moreover, declassified American government documents “clearly imply a Belgian role.” Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention*, 153.

¹²⁷ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 182.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 183.

paratroopers, flown in by American C-130s, were dropped on the outskirts of the city on November 24. Along with a white mercenary force, including South Africans, they fought their way into the city. The operation, known as Dragon Rouge, succeeded in rescuing the hostages. The Belgian paratroopers soon departed, but the mercenary forces pushed on. By March 1965, the insurgency was contained and no longer presented a serious threat to the central government.¹²⁹

Most African nations objected not only to Tshombe, but also to his external support, especially the combined American-Belgian-white mercenary force that retook Stanleyville. As assessed by Thomas Borstelmann, “they saw it as a reassertion of external white control over the sovereignty of an African state.”¹³⁰ Washington and the American public, the latter informed, as in 1960, by sensationalist press reports of Congolese black rebels assaulting innocent white victims, were surprised by the almost unanimous African condemnation of American participation in the largely successful Stanleyville hostage rescue mission – and that was precisely how it was perceived in the United States. The consequences of Stanleyville, as they effected any future American efforts to support black Africans against the remaining white regimes in southern Africa,

¹²⁹ Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention*, 159.

¹³⁰ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 184.

were both a bitterness at the African reaction and, as noted by Thomas Noer, a deep “disillusionment with black Africa by late 1964.”¹³¹

To a large degree, the African reaction to the Stanleyville incident, underscored by widespread American perceptions of savage black cannibals running amok in the dark jungles of Africa, explains the Johnson’s Administration’s increasing reticence in condemning Portuguese colonialism. Although the liberation movements in Lisbon’s various colonies had begun their insurgencies, the Lusitanian empire still represented a relative sea of stability in sub-Saharan Africa.¹³² Moreover, Tshombe’s return to power

¹³¹ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 168.

¹³² The restraint in confronting Lisbon’s colonialism, as discussed, actually began during the Kennedy administration as the American lease on the Azores military facilities approached expiration. Moreover, support for the anti-Portuguese liberation movements came under increasing attacks as the Europeanists in the State Department rallied against American assistance to Holden Roberto and Eduardo Mondlane. At least as early as mid-1963, with Kennedy still president, their efforts had produced State Department imposed restrictions on contacts with the Portuguese liberation groups, apparently in an effort to assuage Portuguese sensitivities. Circular Airgram 14448 (CA-14448), of June 24, 1963, which promulgated the State Department’s instructions on this subject to the American Embassies in Algiers, Conakry, Dakar, Dar-es-Salaam, and Leopoldville, among others, stated in part, “You should not initiate or seek out contacts with these nationalists. If they ask see Embassy officer, should be received by officers other than Ambassador, preferably at Pol Officer level.” The general instructions in the airgram were reiterated to the American Ambassador in Leopoldville on July 1, 1963, with the following additional advice. “Since GOP [Government of Portugal] has post at Leo, Port Embassy should be informed after meetings that nationalists seen at their request...If nationalists press to see Ambassador and Ambassador believes direct contact by him desirable, he should submit appropriate justification and request prior authorization from Dept. If Embassy officers meet Holden Roberto socially or otherwise, they may of course converse with him. Utmost discretion required in such contacts.” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. XXI, *Africa*, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Republic of the Congo, July 1, 1963, 567 (quotes CA-14448). The official distancing from the nationalists accelerated during the Johnson Administration. In March 1965, for example, Mondlane requested via the American Embassy in Dar-es-Salaam that the FRELIMO delegation at the UN be permitted to meet with State Department officials in Washington. The request was refused, and Mondlane then asked if it was now U.S. policy not to meet with FRELIMO representatives. The State Department’s response reiterated the limitations on contacts with the nationalist movements set out in CA-14448 and advised that the initial request for a meeting in Washington

in mid-1964, although brief, had negative consequences for the Angolan liberation movements.¹³³ Seeking to mend fences with the Portuguese who had condemned Adoula's support for Roberto's National Front, he curtailed the activities of the FNLA, which used the Congo as its base for raids into Angola, significantly contributing to the collapse of the organization as a viable military force by the end of 1964. Tshombe's pro-Portuguese bias also affected the MPLA's operations in Angola as the Zairian army interdicted their attempts to cross into Angola from neighboring Congo (Brazzaville), the base for the MPLA's insurgency efforts against the Portuguese following its ouster from the Congo (Leopoldville) in 1963.

Despite the effects of the Congo crisis on Washington's perception of black Africa, one State Department official made a last effort to affect Portugal's colonial policy. This final attempt came courtesy of Ambassador Anderson in Lisbon. In April 1965, Anderson sent the State Department a detailed proposal for offering incentives to the Portuguese to engage in a process leading to self-determination for its colonies. In August, the State Department authorized the ambassador to present his plan, as modified by the State Department, to the Portuguese.

(and not in New York at the UN) appeared designed to embarrass the Department and American-Portuguese relations. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. XXIV, *Africa*, "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Tanganyika," March 17, 1965 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov>.

¹³³ Tshombe fled the country yet again in 1965. Following Mobutu's seizure of power in November 1965, he tried the former prime minister in absentia and sentenced him to death. Tshombe died in an Algerian prison in 1967.

The approved plan was complex and wide-ranging in scope. It included detailed points to which the Portuguese would have to agree, for example, accelerating social, economic and political reforms in the African territories. Itemized points to which neighboring African states and other African governments would also have to agree, including their cessation of support for the nationalist movements, followed. The plan proposed American and NATO economic and technical support for Portugal to develop its African territories, which, after an eight-year transition period, would be allowed to choose their future relationship with Lisbon. As noted, “A full range of choice would be left to the people and would include maintenance of the present relationship with Portugal, autonomy within a Portuguese commonwealth, or full independence.” The objective of the proposal “would be a peaceful transition and creation of stable societies in the African territories no matter what political decisions are made by the people.”¹³⁴

In early September 1965, Ambassador Anderson discussed his proposal with Prime Minister Salazar. After several more meetings over the next few months, the Portuguese finally rejected the plan, which they ultimately deemed “unworkable.” It was at this point, mid-March 1965, that Ambassador Anderson sent a telegram to Washington in which he expressed those sentiments noted at the beginning of this chapter. The

¹³⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. XXIV, *Africa*, “Circular Airgram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Portugal (CA-3167), Instructions to Lisbon,” August 23, 1965 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov>.

ambassador essentially concluded that the Portuguese commitment to continuing their civilizing mission could not be influenced by American efforts, despite the broad interpretation of the meaning of self-determination.

The Anderson plan was the last attempt by the United States to “seduce” Portugal out of Africa, and it failed largely because the Salazar regime was convinced it could continue its colonialism, on its own terms, in perpetuity. Assisted by arms support from the West Germans and French, who made no stipulations against their use in Africa, enjoying a sharp rise in export earnings, especially from Angolan coffee, and buoyed by increased foreign investment in both Portugal and the African territories, especially Angola again, the Portuguese government was able to increase its defense expenditures, providing more resources to containing the rebellion in its colonies. As assessed by the CIA, “In these circumstances, the US is finding it increasingly difficult to convince Portugal that its African policies are misguided...Salazar holds that the Portuguese provinces will soon become an enclave of stability midst a black sea of communism – and that the ‘correctness’ of the Portuguese position will sooner or later be evident even to the US.” Further, “Salazar is not convinced that the tide of African nationalism is irresistible...and that time will prove him right.”¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, “Special Memorandum No. 9-64, Salazar’s Current Prospects,” pp. 3,5 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov>.

After the Portuguese rejection of the Anderson plan in March 1966, the ambassador recommended to Washington “that we let this pot simmer on the back burner until some significant event makes a new approach advisable.”¹³⁶ That is precisely what happened. The Portuguese colonial issue dropped below the foreign policy horizon as Vietnam took precedence over all other concerns. American policy toward southern Africa in the last two years of the Johnson Administration seemed to reflect the president’s increasing pessimism and sense of hopelessness brought on by the increasing, but still unsuccessful, American efforts in Vietnam. As noted by Thomas Noer, the president expressed these sentiments in an August 1967 meeting with members of a liberal congressional delegation, led by Senator Ted Kennedy, which hoped to convince Johnson to take a more active role in opposition to white minority rule in southern Africa. “The president was sympathetic but offered no new policies. He noted that the problems of southern Africa were ‘among the most grim and intractable in the world’ but rejected the suggestion of using economic pressure against the white regimes.”¹³⁷

Despite his humanitarian and egalitarian instincts, even if motivated in part by strong paternalistic sentiments, Johnson, increasingly preoccupied by the growing commitment in Vietnam, refused to use the full force of American power to effect change in southern Africa’s white-power regimes. There were reasons, or at least excuses, for this, which

¹³⁶ Samuels and Haykin, “The Anderson Plan,” 667.

¹³⁷ Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 181.

the president probably considered as valid and justified: American economic, strategic and military interests in the white states far outweighed those elsewhere in southern Africa; Portugal was a NATO ally and the possessor of the Azores; African conduct in the Congo throughout the early 1960s suggested that what the South Africans and Portuguese had been saying all along was perhaps true - that black Africans were not ready for, and perhaps incapable of, self-government and were especially susceptible to Communist influence. Reinforcing the rationale of this agenda was that fact that most American policy makers, with some exceptions, never seemed to be convinced that American actions could actually affect the racist policies of the South Africans or Portuguese.

Like others before him, with the brief exception of the Kennedy era, President Johnson succumbed to the shortsighted interpretation of the Cold War that emphasized the necessity and rightness of the increasingly militarized global battle against the Soviet Union and its alleged "client states." This perspective exiled black Africans, as long as they behaved themselves, to the periphery of American foreign policy considerations. Ultimately, however, it proved detrimental to the interests and concerns of black Africans, failed to engender African support for American policy in Africa and elsewhere, and was counterproductive to the American goal of containing Communism.

Nixon, Ford and Kissinger: Real-politik and “The Tilt” Policy

President Johnson, in the face of growing American casualties in Vietnam and increasing domestic opposition to the war, opted not to run for the presidency in 1968. The newly elected Richard M. Nixon, along with his National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, brought a profound realist perspective to American foreign policy -one that was largely neither encumbered by idealistic rhetoric nor burdened by humanitarian sentiment. Their primary concern revolved around the question, “In what way does this event, or issue, fundamentally affect the balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union?” Referred to often by Kissinger as “global equilibrium,” this question (and the answers thereto) dominated American foreign policy decision making during both the Nixon White House years and in the follow-on Ford Administration.

The Nixon-Kissinger real-politik mind set was reflected early on in their approach to African issues, especially those of southern Africa, which the president and his principle foreign policy adviser never considered as particularly important. The high stakes game of détente, triangular diplomacy, and restoring American global credibility, which they believed had been significantly weakened by American involvement in the continuing and unwinnable war in Southeast Asia, topped the foreign policy agenda. With the exception of South Africa, a minority white regime, the Nixon-Kissinger team assessed the southern African nations, individually and collectively, as possessing little power or

influence in international affairs. Their evaluation determined the low-priority they assigned to the region. Nixon concisely, if not nicely, summed up this perspective on the importance of black Africa in a phone call he made to the sometimes-insecure Henry Kissinger in his first term. The conversation was intended to soothe the latter's jealousy at positive press coverage Secretary of State Rogers had received for a recent trip to Africa: 'Henry, let's leave the niggers to Bill and we'll take care of the rest of the world.'"¹³⁸

As their "minimalist attention" approach to southern Africa specifically concerned Portugal, they did not attempt to resolve the dilemma presented by the continued existence of the Portuguese empire as much as they decided to accommodate it. This turn toward Portugal, replicated in the attitude toward the white regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia, was evident in the major interdepartmental study conducted from April to December 1969 on American foreign policy in southern Africa. Entitled "Study in Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39: Southern Africa," the interagency assessment provided the president with six options on the future direction of United States policy in the region. In January 1970, Kissinger recommended that the president approve Option Two, the so-called "tar baby" or "tilt" option. The premises and recommendations of this option, usually referred to in public as the

¹³⁸ The direct quote attributed to Nixon is from Seymour M. Hersh, "The Price of Power: Kissinger, Nixon, and Chile," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1982, 35.

“Communication” policy, subsequently provided the basis for American foreign policy in southern Africa, at least until Kissinger’s historic visit to the region in the spring of 1976.¹³⁹

Citing the memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon which forwarded the results of the study (referred to simply as NSSM 39), Gerald Bender tells us, “Kissinger presented NSSM 39 to President Nixon in early January 1970 with the recommendation that the U.S. adopt a ‘general posture...along the lines of option two’ which called for the United States to ‘maintain public opposition to racial repression, but relax political isolation and economic restrictions on the white states.’”¹⁴⁰

Briefly stated, the major assumption behind the Option Two policy was predicated upon the belief that the white-controlled regimes in central and southern Africa (the Portuguese in their colonies and the minority governments in Rhodesia and South Africa) had staying power, and that the black nationalist movements, lacking resolve, could not

¹³⁹ No one in the Nixon Administration has ever officially admitted that the president had chosen Option Two from the policy review. However, we now know from insiders’ accounts that Kissinger sent him the decision memorandum recommending that option, and that the ensuing American actions generally followed the option’s recommended course of action. Roger Morris, Kissinger’s assistant on African affairs on the National Security Council during Nixon’s first term, was a principle architect of the policy study and detailed the NSSM 39 process from start to finish in his memoir, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Policy* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977). He has noted that American policy in southern Africa in the wake of NSSM 39 flowed from the assumptions and recommended actions contained in Option Two, although, as he observed, the option merely put into print what had largely been unwritten American policy in southern Africa since the Johnson era. *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁴⁰ Gerald Bender, “Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure,” in *American Policy in Southern Africa: The Stakes and the Stance*, ed. Rene Lemarchand (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1978), 68. Bender’s source is “Memorandum (attached to NSSM 39) from Henry A. Kissinger to Richard M. Nixon, Subject: Policy Decisions on Southern Africa,” January 2, 1970, Tab A.

be militarily successful in defeating them.¹⁴¹ The policy accepted change as inevitable, but emphasized that the goal was evolutionary, peaceful reform. This could only come about through the whites, influenced by subtle American pressures. Black violence could never achieve majority rule and would, instead, lead to increased chaos, instability and opportunities for Communist penetration.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Apparently, neither NSSM 39's authors, nor the final decision makers, most notably Nixon and Kissinger, ever questioned the resolve of the white regimes, calculating that their conventional military superiority and determination to hold the line could contain, if not defeat, their respective insurgencies. The selection of the Tar Baby Option was also influenced by the continuing belief that the white regimes offered stability and a bulwark against Soviet influence in southern Africa and the best hope for preserving American economic, strategic and military stakes in the region, especially in South Africa. As noted in an Op-Ed by Graham Hovey, a member of the Editorial Board of the *New York Times* in the 1970s, Option Two was largely influenced by "our own racism and lingering notions of 'white supremacy'; business investments in South Africa, Rhodesia and Angola; obsessive hostility for any program that sounded like Communism; obsessive concern for 'stability' and benevolence toward regimes, black or white, that promised it." Graham Hovey, "Bankruptcy on Africa," *New York Times*, March 2, 1976, 29.

¹⁴² The authors of the policy study hypothesized "Peaceful evolution is the only avenue to change because (a) black violence only produces internal reaction, and (b) military realities rule out a black victory at any stage. Moreover, there are reasons to question the depth and permanence of black resolve." National Security Council, Interdepartmental Group for Africa, "Study in Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39: Southern Africa" December 9, 1969, p. 5 {database on-line}; available from Digital National Security Archive. This comment is puzzling at best, and exceptionally myopic at worst, in light of the American military's inability to defeat the insurgency in South Vietnam. The actual text of Option Two of NSSM 39 reads, in part, as follows: "Premise: The whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive change can come about is through them. There is no hope for the blacks to gain the political rights they seek through violence, which will only lead to chaos and increased opportunities for the communists. We can, by selective relaxation of our stance towards the white regimes, encourage some modification of their current racial and colonial policies and through more substantial economic assistance to the black states (a total of about \$5 m annually in technical assistance to the black states) help to draw the two groups together and exert some influence on both for peaceful change. General Posture: We would maintain public opposition to racial repression but relax political isolation and economic restrictions on the white states....This option accepts, at least over a 3-to-5-year period, the prospect of unrequited US initiatives toward the whites and some opposition from the blacks in order to develop an atmosphere conducive to change in white attitudes through persuasion and erosion." "Text of Option 2 of NSSM 39," in *Africa Contemporary Record, Annual Survey and Documents, 1974-1975* (NY: Africana Publishing Company, 1975, A99-A100.

On paper and in rhetoric, Option Two was not a major break with the de facto American policy toward southern Africa that had been practiced since the later years of the Johnson administration. As previously discussed, with the exception of Rhodesia, where American policy generally followed that of the British, President Johnson refused to consider a tougher stance against South Africa and Portugal, including the imposition of economic sanctions.¹⁴³ Like the non-committal, middle-road policy of the late Johnson White House years, which tried to partially please all the stakeholders in the issue of white minority rule, but really pleased no one at all, the ostensible goal of American policy under Option Two was to effect a balance between American economic, political and strategic interests in the region, none of which were deemed vital, and a professed commitment to gradual reform of the white-controlled system.

With Option Two, however, came the notion that such reform did not necessarily include majority rule as an objective. In fact, Option Two's language implied that Washington acceded to continuing minority rule. "To encourage this change in white attitudes, we would indicate our willingness to accept political arrangements short of

¹⁴³As noted by Thomas Noer, the Johnson Administration opted for increased communications and dialog with the white regimes hoping thereby to promote gradual reform. Noer remarks, "Instead of sanctions, the administration renewed its call for negotiations and gradual reform." US ambassador to the UN, Arthur Goldberg, who replaced Adlai Stevenson in 1965, "explained that Washington was dedicated to 'a genuine dialog on the basis of self-determination' in southern Africa," as 'no differences can be solved without contact, discussion, or negotiations.'" Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 181. Increased communications and dialog with the white regimes in southern Africa was a central tenet of Option Two, and "communications" even became the quasi-official title of the policy.

guaranteed progress toward majority rule, provided that they assure broadened political participation in some form by the whole population.”¹⁴⁴

To achieve the balance between protection of American materialistic interests, which were largely tied to the white regimes, and a commitment to gradual reform, Option Two called for a less dogmatic approach to the issues associated with the international condemnation of Pretoria and Lisbon, a revitalized effort to establish a constructive dialog with the white minority regimes, an increase in economic aid to selective (and moderate) black states, and an effort to encourage moderation by all parties to the struggles then on-going in southern Africa.¹⁴⁵

The authors of NSSM 39 admitted that striking the balance between the two desired objectives would be formidable if not contradictory at times.¹⁴⁶ With perfect twenty-

¹⁴⁴ *Africa Contemporary Record*, “Text of Option Two of NSSM 39,” A100. Option Two, then, substantially diverged from the idea of self-determination as defined during both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. That concept, while not necessarily equating to full independence, had still implied a one-man, one-vote political system.

¹⁴⁵ As previously noted, the public name for the Option Two policy, whose exact contents were unknown until its details began to leak in 1972, was the “Communication” policy, coined by Nixon’s first Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, David Newsom. As reported by the journal *Africa*, “During a September 1970 speech in Chicago, Assistant Secretary Newsom offered the clearest description to that time of the administration’s new Africa policy, labeling it *communication*. ‘Communication does not mean acceptance,’ he said. ‘It means, in a sense, a greater challenge than isolation.’ Further, he noted, ‘it could mean that greater hope could be given to both Blacks and Whites who seek another way [than violence].’” “Kissinger’s Secret Paper,” *Africa*, no. 40 (December 1974): 24.

¹⁴⁶ “Study in Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39: Southern Africa,” 14. As Option Two specifically applied to American-Portuguese relations, Gerald Bender has commented that not only were the goals contradictory, but also they were hypocritical, “because no one honestly believed that Salazar or Caetano would be convinced through “communication” of the need for self-determination in the colonies. In fact, the United States never moved the Portuguese an inch closer to granting independence to

twenty hindsight, Roger Morris, Kissinger's National Security Council southern Africa expert, recognized the difficulty of carrying out the new policy with its inherent conflict of interests. He observed that the only result of the adoption of Option Two "would be to mire the United States deeper on the side of the oppressors...In retrospect, it was a disaster, naïve in concept, practically impossible for the government to execute, and thus a ready cover for pursuing the most reactionary and short-sighted U.S. interests in the region."¹⁴⁷

Morris' evaluation, although given retrospectively, was correct. The actions taken after Option Two's adoption manifested a distinct tilt toward the white minority regimes (hence one of the option's nicknames). As assessed by Anthony Lake, its implementation represented "a fundamental shift in policy."¹⁴⁸ Despite increased aid of \$5 million to moderate black states in the region, the United States significantly reduced overt pressure on Portugal and South Africa in such international arenas as the United Nations, where the American representative consistently abstained from, or vetoed,

Angola, Mozambique, or Guinea-Bissau. Furthermore, the policy of Communication did not include relations with the nationalist movements...who were generally ignored so as not to offend the Portuguese." Bender, "Kissinger in Angola," 69.

¹⁴⁷ Morris, *Uncertain Greatness*, 111.

¹⁴⁸ Anthony Lake, *The "Tar Baby" Option: American Policy Toward Southern Rhodesia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 123. Anthony Lake spent nearly twenty years as a Foreign Service Officer in the State Department, including head of the Policy Planning Staff during the Carter Administration. He briefly served as an aide to Henry Kissinger, from 1969 to 1970, but resigned that position after the American extension of the Vietnam War into Cambodia. Later, he became a foreign policy advisor to candidate Bill Clinton and then served as Clinton's first National Security Advisor.

condemnations of both. Perhaps the most visible manifestation of the new policy occurred with Nixon's 1971 approval of the Byrd Amendment. This sanctions-busting measure allowed for the unrestricted importation of chromium ore by American companies, as well as seventy-one other strategic and critical materials, thirteen from Rhodesia. The action was in direct violation of UN sanctions, which the United States had supported, generally better than most other nations, since their imposition in 1966.

The history of the Byrd Amendment is detailed in Lake's excellent study. The author examines in detail the forces that came together to support or oppose the amendment, the major arguments for each position on the amendment, and the consequences to American policy in southern Africa, and generally in the Third World, as a result of the American violation of the sanctions.¹⁴⁹ The study crystallizes some of the priorities that shaped decision-making in the Nixon White House as they related to American policies toward

¹⁴⁹ Briefly, the momentum for the Byrd Amendment gained steam after the Nixon Administration approved a one-time importation of Rhodesian chrome in 1970, justifying the action on the questionable premise that the chrome had been purchased before the 1966 sanctions. In 1971, as the Senate debated the amendment, The Nixon Administration voiced its opposition to the amendment, but did not lobby vigorously against it. Instead, it permitted a tightly leashed State Department, most notably the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, David Newsom, to lead what little opposition the Executive Department decided to muster. The White House's less-than-enthusiastic opposition to Byrd's sanction-busting measure, considered by both Nixon and Kissinger of minor importance, enhanced the power of those business interests lobbying for the amendment, which in the end, as noted by Lake, proved to be the deciding factor in the amendment's passage. "The ambivalence of the administration helped ensure Byrd's victory. The ambivalence was important in itself; and more, it allowed the corporate lobbyists who supported Byrd's efforts to be the most potent outside force influencing the Congress – as Senator Humphrey has put it, in 'twisting public policy for private interests.'" Ibid., 226. To further ensure its passage, the pro-Byrd Amendment faction in the Senate made sure the amendment was attached to the Military Procurement Act of 1971, which the Administration supported. After its approval by Congress, Nixon, without comment, signed it into law on November 17, 1971.

the minority white regimes in sub-Saharan Africa. It reveals that economic interests, in this case in the form of the American ferrochrome industry, cloaked in the thinly veiled argument that continued access to Rhodesian chrome was a vital national security interest, were judged by both the Congress and the Executive Branch to be more important than adhering to international law.¹⁵⁰

The adoption of Option Two as the new American policy toward southern Africa clearly facilitated the Byrd Amendment's passage, as the White House opposed it in words but not in actions, a decision consistent with the white minority friendly aspects of the "Communications" policy. As Lake noted, "'Communication' had become, by late 1970, a conceptual cover for a series of moves that favored the Smith regime."¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ The national security argument, as advanced by Senator Harry F. Byrd (Ind., VA) and his supporters, postulated that since the Soviet Union was the second major producer and exporter of chrome, it was reasonable and prudent for the United States to decrease its "unhealthy" dependence on the Communist state by allowing the American ferrochrome industry to import, once again, Rhodesian chrome. *Ibid.*, *passim*. With the advent of détente and its encouragement of expanded trade with the Soviet Union, the bogus national security argument lost its clout, but efforts to repeal the amendment in 1973-1975 were unsuccessful.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 156. There were, however, unfavorable consequences of its passage. Among other things, the Byrd Amendment aligned the United States with South Africa and Portugal in official violation of UN sanctions. And, in an ironic twist, as explained by Lake, an unintended effect of the amendment was its negative consequences for the American ferrochrome industry, which used imported chrome ore, along with iron ore, to manufacture a variety of steel alloys. "The industry's lobbyist on Capitol Hill were successful, but their success had unintended results. Far from saving jobs and increasing production in an already faltering industry, the Amendment has instead accelerated the industry's decline; by the end of 1973, two of the four major domestic producers had decided to go out of the ferrochrome business. The Amendment was broadly worded...this wording would permit the import not just of Rhodesian chrome, but also of a competitive flood of low-cost ferrochrome itself." *Ibid.*, 240-241.

The “Communication” policy also overtly favored South Africa and Portugal. As a result of Option Two, The Nixon Administration, over the objections of the State Department, introduced flexibility into the American arms embargo policy against both. In January 1970, immediately following the adoption of the new policy, the president approved the sale of non-lethal equipment that had dual civilian and military use (such as transport aircraft and helicopters), in effect exempting such dual-use equipment from the embargo.¹⁵² As reported by author and journalist Bruce Oudes, the effects of Nixon’s dual-use decision were immediate. Since 1970, “U.S. exports to South Africa, particularly aircraft, have ballooned to well beyond \$1 billion annually. South Africa, which could now buy types of aircraft forbidden by the Johnson administration, imported a total of \$151 million in U.S. aircraft in 1971 and 1972 as compared with an earlier five-year (1966 through 1970) import total of \$124 million in U.S. planes.”¹⁵³

A substantive manifestation of the new policy, as it applied specifically to Portugal, occurred with the early 1972 renewal of the long-expired lease of the Lajes air base in the Azores. According to Terence Smith of the *New York Times*, as part of the deal, the American side “agreed to authorize Export-Import Bank loans to Portugal up to \$400-million, a total equivalent to four times all the ExImBank’s assistance to Portugal since

¹⁵² “National Security Decision Memorandum 38 (NSDM 38): United States Policy Toward Southern Africa,” January 28, 1970, Box H-213, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

¹⁵³ Bruce Oudes, “South Africa, U.S. Secrets,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 22, 1976.

1946.¹⁵⁴ In concert with the relaxation of the military embargo against Lisbon, the Nixon Administration promptly approved the sale of two Boeing 707 airliners (previously banned) directly to the Portuguese government - aircraft that were probably used to transport Portuguese troops to the African territories.¹⁵⁵

Option Two also effected American relations with the liberation movements in Portugal's African territories. Government officials were directed to further distance themselves from official contact with the respective movements, although low-level contacts with representatives of the liberations groups were still permitted. Further, the CIA closed its small stations in Luanda, Angola, and Lourenco Marques, Mozambique. Thereafter, the Agency relied on the Portuguese intelligence service, the large CIA station in Kinshasa and its client, Holden Roberto, and probably also the South African intelligence service, Bureau of State Security (BOSS), for information on the colonial insurgencies.¹⁵⁶ Although later explained by then Director of Central Intelligence,

¹⁵⁴ Terrence Smith, "U.S. Widens Ties to African Whites, *New York Times*, April 2, 1972, 14. Smith was the first individual to sniff out the details of the new policy, which was discussed, debated, drafted and signed in complete secrecy. His lengthy article discusses the concrete measures taken by the Nixon Administration to expand its contacts and improve its relations with the white regimes in southern Africa following the adoption of Option Two.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ The South African government created BOSS on May 1, 1969, shortly after the interdepartmental task force on Africa began its work on drafting the response to NSSM 39. Author and journalist, Stephen Talbot, has detailed the close association among the intelligence services of the United States, South Africa, and Portugal in "The CIA and BOSS: Thick as Thieves," in *Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa*, eds. Ellen, Ray, William Schaap, and Karl Van Meter (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1979), 266-275. Talbot claims that NSSM 39 "was based, in part, on CIA reports which were, in turn, heavily reliant on data provided by BOSS and the Portuguese secret police, PIDE." Ibid., 267.

Richard Helms, as an economic measure, it appears more than coincidental that this action came nearly simultaneously with President Nixon's early January 1970 decision on Option Two.

Early in the Nixon Administration, even as NSSM 39 was being drafted, the United States effectively ended its support for the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO). This occurred after Eduardo Mondlane's assassination in 1969 and severed a relationship that dated back to the earliest years of the Kennedy Administration when the movement began receiving clandestine governmental support and overt support through the Ford Foundation.¹⁵⁷ The American government also officially shunned the unified Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde's liberation movement, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC). As reported in the journal *Africa*, for example, "In 1972, Kissinger and his aides recoiled from a proposal that they meet secretly with the late Amilcar Cabral during his U.S. visit. That coolness continued even after the PAIGC became the widely-recognized government of Guinea Bissau." In May 1974, the same article tells us that the United States cast the only vote against Guinea-Bissau's admission to the UN's World Health Organization and was one of the

¹⁵⁷ Kenneth Maxwell, "The Legacy of Decolonization," in *Regional Conflict and U.S. Policy: Angola and Mozambique*, ed. Richard J. Bloomfield (Algonac, MI: Reference Publications, Ind., 1988), 17.

last nations to recognize the new government following Portugal's granting of independence.¹⁵⁸

In Angola, Option Two translated into an official ratcheting down of relations with, and support for, Holden Roberto, leader of the FNLA. As previously discussed, that connection extended back to at least the early years of the Kennedy Administration. At that time, Roberto's movement, then known as the Union of the People's of Angola (UPA), and subsequently as the Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile (GRAE), was the only recognized Angolan nationalist movement, first by the Congo (Leopoldville-Kinshasa) and several other African countries, and then by the OAU in 1963. According to various sources, as a result of the Nixon Administration's new 'tilt' policy, Roberto still continued to receive \$10,000 per year as a retainer fee to provide intelligence on Angola, but the FNLA, as a party to the conflict in Angola, was not to receive any American support.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ "Kissinger's Secret Paper," *Africa*, no. 40 (December 1974), 24. Cabral was assassinated in 1973.

¹⁵⁹ See, for example, the previously cited Gelb article, "U.S., Soviets, China Reported Aiding Portugal, Angola," 22, and Hersh, "Early Angola Aid by U.S. Reported," 14. Gerald Bender makes the interesting point that the cutback in American support for Roberto after the adoption of Option Two was most significant in that it represented a change from "program assistance" to "personal assistance," terminology he defined thusly: "Program assistance is the term used when the CIA gives money to a party or organization to help it implement its program; this term is distinguished from 'personal assistance' when money is given to an individual for information about the program and activities of a given party or organization. Thus, when the CIA switched from program assistance to the FNLA to personal assistance for Holden Roberto in 1970, it amounted to giving Roberto money for information about the activities of the FNLA to defeat the Portuguese rather than money to actually help him carry out his program of ending the Portuguese colonization of Angola." Bender, "Kissinger in Angola," footnote 11, 131.

A series of events in the spring of 1974, however, shook Lisbon and the Lusitanian empire. In April, in part as a result of the never-ending African wars, a small, radicalized group of mostly junior officers, calling themselves the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) overthrew Portugal's government. Shortly thereafter, the MFA's leadership declared its intention to grant independence to Portugal's African colonies. The beginning of decolonization negotiations with Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique quickly followed the announcement. However, Angola's destiny, which will be discussed later, became caught up in Lisbon's internal political struggles, a situation that was further exacerbated by conflict among Angola's three liberation movements. For several months after the April coup, Lisbon and its richest and largest colony traveled an uncertain road.

The administration's Option Two policy had been in effect for four years as these events quickly unfolded, and the tilt toward the white regimes was plainly obvious. However, the policy's major assumption that "the whites are here to stay," was clearly no longer applicable to the Portuguese situation - these "whites" were planning to leave. Portugal's decolonization also meant that South Africa's white-controlled buffer, Angola and Mozambique, would eventually be in the hands of black Africans, presenting an entirely new challenge to the apartheid regime (as well as Rhodesia).

Despite all this, Nixon's foreign policy cadre, most notably Henry Kissinger, failed to grasp, or simply ignored, the impact of these changes on American policy in the region. The State Department reviewed Option Two several times, as will be discussed, but concluded that it had served American interests well and would continue to do so. That conclusion proved to be woefully incorrect.

Conclusion

Throughout most of the Cold War era, up to and including the American involvement in Angola in the mid-1970s, Washington's policies usually aided and abetted the efforts of the Western European nations to hold on to their overseas empires in Africa, either directly through colonialism, or indirectly via neo-colonialism. This policy stemmed from the belief that the best way to protect American interests was to support the status quo. Those interests remained fairly constant throughout this era. They included the inter-related, security-centered concerns of solidifying American ties with its NATO allies through support for their African policies, ensuring American access to southern Africa's strategic resources, and denying Communist penetration.

During the same time frame, the United States, while sometimes criticizing South African apartheid, generally adopted policies that also supported the status quo there, while usually following the British line on Rhodesia. In 1971, however, the United States broke with British and international policy by enacting the Byrd Amendment. This

sanctions-busting measure allowed American companies to import a variety of Rhodesian metals, including chrome.

The most notable exception to the historical pattern of support for the West European's policies in Africa occurred during the presidency of John F. Kennedy. His administration challenged colonialism and neo-colonialism, the latter most importantly in the American support for UN efforts to end the Belgian-supported Katangan rebellion and to reunite the Congo. The Afro-centric disposition of some of Kennedy's important advisors also led to several sincere, if unsuccessful, attempts to economically seduce Portugal into granting self-determination to its colonies. Still, this new approach to African-American relations gradually weakened and gave way, once again, to the imperatives of the Cold War, including the importance of the NATO alliance to Western security. The approaching expiration deadline for the American lease of military facilities on the Portuguese Azores Islands played a key role in the Kennedy Administration's softened attitude toward Portugal and her colonies, beginning in mid-1962.

Early in the Johnson Administration, before the exigencies of the escalating commitment to South Vietnam and with the Kennedy Africanists still in government, although with rapidly declining influence, American policy seemed to continue on the course set by Kennedy, at least as it pertained to Portugal. In 1965, the United States tried, yet again unsuccessfully, to persuade the Lisbon government, with promises of

economic rewards, to establish a timetable for self-determination for its colonies. This was the last of such attempts. In 1966, both Williams and Stevenson left government service. With them went the tattered remains of the American support for African nationalism and Portuguese decolonization. Thereafter, President Johnson accepted, even accommodated, Portuguese colonialism. His policy toward South Africa was no less conciliatory.

President Nixon and his chief foreign policy advisor, Henry Kissinger, entered the White House with little or no pretense of trying to change the world through moral suasion. For Kissinger, that was “missionary work.” Their new policy toward southern Africa, and the actions that ensued from that policy, amply demonstrated their rejection of the traditional idealistic strand in the fabric of American foreign policy.¹⁶⁰ They did, however, aspire to refashioning the international environment into one more conducive to American interests through policies based on a real-politik perspective and “to shape events in the light of our own purposes.”¹⁶¹ How Nixon and Kissinger, and in 1974, Ford and Kissinger, went about the task, and how their efforts were adversely affected by an

¹⁶⁰ Historian Robert L. Beisner has closely analyzed the “historical” Henry Kissinger. Among other things, Beisner notes that Kissinger’s rejection of traditional American ideals, such as justice, freedom and human rights, and his and Nixon’s desire “to purge our foreign policy of all sentimentality,” foreclosed long-term support for his general policies, even if early on in his White House years he ranked very high in popularity polls. Beisner concludes, “Americans, still believing in a national mission, did not warm to his realpolitik. Their beliefs and values are the “necessity” of the American experience to which Kissinger failed to accommodate himself.” Robert L. Beisner, “History and Henry Kissinger,” *Diplomatic History* 14, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 526.

unexpected leftist coup in Portugal and the subsequent decolonization of its African territories - events which ultimately led to the ill-advised covert American intervention in Angola in 1975 - are the subjects of succeeding chapters.

¹⁶¹ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 683.

CHAPTER 2
HENRY KISSINGER, GLOBAL ARCHITECT

*“It is extremely in our interest, I believe,
to keep the present world going as long as possible.”*

Henry Kissinger¹⁶²

When he became president in January 1969, Richard Nixon was determined to consolidate all foreign policy decision making in the White House so that he, along with the man he chose as his national security affairs adviser, Henry Kissinger, could go about recasting global affairs along lines more favorable to American leadership and security interests. To this end, the new president would come to increasingly rely on Kissinger, who shared the president’s viewpoint on the lack of creativity and boldness in Washington’s official foreign policy establishment, as his primary adviser. In effect, the Nixon-Kissinger team consigned the president’s first Secretaries of State and Defense, William Rogers and Melvin Laird, along with the bureaucracies they headed, to minor roles in American diplomacy.

This chapter, which is largely based on a synthesis of secondary sources, focuses on three related issues. I will first discuss Henry Kissinger’s effort to enhance his role in

¹⁶² William Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 1. The chapters in this book include transcripts of various Kissinger’s memoranda of conversations from the Winston Lord Policy Planning Staff files at the National Archives, as well as additional transcripts of Kissinger’s conversations with Soviet leaders between 1974 and 1976, which the State Department released pursuant to a Freedom of Information Act request from William Burr.

foreign policy at the expense of the official Washington foreign policy establishment. Using four crises, all of which occurred in the second year of the Nixon presidency, I will explain how Kissinger was able to effect his rise to the pinnacle of American diplomacy. These four events began with the Cambodian invasion in the spring of 1970 and extended into the summer and fall of that year with the crises in Jordan, Cuba and Chile. They were important junctures in Kissinger's efforts to cement his relationship with the president and increase his influence and authority, while simultaneously weakening the national security roles of his chief bureaucratic rivals, Rogers and Laird.

Secondly, a review of the four crises of 1970, and how the increasingly close Nixon-Kissinger partnership dealt with them, will also provide important insights to their shared geo-strategic perspective and the substance and style of their decision-making process. The lessons learned from the outcome of these crises provided important guidelines for the president and his global architect in their future foreign policy endeavors.

Finally, I will also briefly discuss the White House's efforts to restructure the global environment, through triangular diplomacy, in such a way that American credibility and leadership would be sustained. Those efforts, however, excluded a large part of the world that Kissinger liked to refer to as "the South." From the Nixon-Kissinger real-politik perspective, the North-South dimensions of international politics were unimportant and only deserved attention if and when they threatened to disrupt the

singularly important East-West dynamic. As a result of this perspective, American policy toward sub-Saharan Africa, as set forth in Option Two, was essentially an uninformed, or misinformed, policy of indifference, most notably toward the region's national liberation movements. It would have consequences for how the United States behaved toward Portugal's decolonization efforts.

After President Nixon's resignation in August 1974, as a result of Watergate, President Ford asked Henry Kissinger to stay on as both national security adviser and secretary of state. He would carry his experiences and the lessons he extracted from the Nixon years, including his often heavy-handed, confrontational tendencies, into the Ford White House. They would affect how he and his new president viewed and handled the Portuguese and related Angolan crises of 1974-1975.

The Rise of Henry Kissinger

Historian William Burr, in his introduction to *The Kissinger Transcripts*, noted that when Henry Kissinger became President Nixon's national security affairs assistant in 1969, he "worried that the United States was losing clout in world affairs after a long stretch of supremacy and saw new circumstances – for example, a more independent Europe, the growing autonomy of Third World nations, and U.S.-Soviet nuclear parity – as forces that were making American power 'irrelevant.'"¹⁶³ Kissinger's uneasiness with

¹⁶³ Ibid.

the perceived decline in American power was directly related to the then ongoing war in Vietnam.

That long conflict continued to sap American economic, political and military strength and, as both Nixon and Kissinger believed, to undermine the United States' global credibility and leadership of the Western Alliance. While meeting in secret with a North Vietnamese delegation in Paris in August 1969, Kissinger explained the significance of a satisfactory resolution of the war to the future global role of the United States. He told the French foreign minister, "In the conduct of long-range American policy throughout the world, it was important that we not be confounded by a fifth-rate agricultural power...It was unthinkable for a major power like the United States to allow itself to be destroyed politically by North Vietnam."¹⁶⁴ Nixon echoed this conviction when he subsequently addressed the nation in early November. The president reiterated his position that a quick withdrawal from South Vietnam would result in a disaster for both that nation and the United States. Moreover, such a withdrawal would be seen as a

¹⁶⁴ "Henry Kissinger and Maurice Schumann, Memorandum of Conversation," August 4, 1969; quoted in Robert Dallek, *Partners in Power: Nixon and Kissinger* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 152. In 1969, at least, a "satisfactory" conclusion to the war, from Nixon and Kissinger's perspective, included an agreement ensuring at least the short-term independence of the Saigon government and avoiding a military defeat that, as Dallek notes, would diminish "American sacrifices in blood and treasure" and undermine "its international credibility." Ibid., 168.

defeat, and “would result in a collapse of confidence in American leadership...throughout the world.”¹⁶⁵

Over the next five years, President Nixon and his principal foreign policy architect, Henry Kissinger, would shape the international environment along lines more favorable to American interests and leadership. As observed by Burr, by late 1973, Kissinger, now also Secretary of State, “would find international conditions far more satisfactory...he mused that it would be possible to conceive of ‘different worlds in which we have to live’ where power alignments were less acceptable to the United States. He thought that current alignments were then altogether favorable. Hence, Kissinger concluded, ‘It is extremely in our interest, I believe, to keep the present world going as long as possible.’”¹⁶⁶

The formidable task of constructing a more-accommodating world environment simultaneously involved Kissinger’s largely successful efforts to transform his national security adviser role into a more authoritative position – one in which his personal leadership of American diplomacy would be subject to veto only by the man in the Oval Office. This meant, among other things, weakening the influence of the Secretary of State, William P. Rogers, and the Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, and circumventing the cumbersome processes and inertia of the Washington bureaucracy, especially that of

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 164.

¹⁶⁶ Burr, *The Kissinger Transcripts*, 1.

the State and Defense Departments.¹⁶⁷ To accomplish these objectives, Kissinger needed the opportunity to ingratiate himself with the president and to validate his foreign policy credentials with a man who considered his own adroitness in world affairs as considerable.

Such opportunities were rare in the first fifteen month of Nixon's first term. With the exception of Middle East diplomacy, which the president left to Secretary of State Rogers, he was slow to relax his grip on the diplomatic helm. In early 1969, however, Kissinger was successful in establishing a working rapport with the president, which would serve him well later on. This occurred during Nixon's first visit to Europe in February, as recounted by Walter Isaacson. "For Kissinger, the significance of the European trip had less to do with its substance than the chance to define his own role. A month or so into the job, he had not yet formed a personal relationship with the president. They communicated mainly in memos and stilted meetings. With his desire to wrest

¹⁶⁷ In-depth analyses of Nixon and Kissinger's modus operandi, especially their efforts to by-pass the Washington foreign policy bureaucracy, their penchant for secrecy, and their desire to consolidate all decision making processes in the White House are found in Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, Chapter 3, "1968," passim; Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), especially Chapter 10, "Kissinger's Empire," 183-211; Jussi Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), passim; Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), especially Chapter 2, "A New NSC System," 25-45; Jussi Hanhimaki, "'Dr. Kissinger' or 'Mr. Henry'?" Kissingerology, Thirty Years and Counting," *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 5 (November 2003): 637-675; Robert Beisner, "History and Henry Kissinger," *Diplomatic History* 14, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 511-527.

control from the bureaucracy, Kissinger spent much of the trip trying to establish his authority.”

On the flight to Europe, Kissinger bumped his long-time colleague and just as often rival, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, from Air Force One under the pretext that he didn’t “think there should be too many Jews around.” Kissinger had appointed Sonnenfeldt to his National Security Council staff as the European and Soviet expert and valued his abilities as well as his loyalty. Still, as Isaacson relates, “Kissinger’s condescending treatment of Sonnenfeldt reflected Kissinger’s desire to be the only foreign policy staffer to have direct contact with the president.” In the end, Isaacson concludes, “The trip was an enormous boost for Kissinger,” especially for the formation of the professionally close, but curious, relationship between Nixon and Kissinger that would help “sustain their turbulent partnership for more than five years.”¹⁶⁸

Despite Kissinger’s early success in gaining the president’s ear, Nixon continued to dominate the diplomatic agenda and to set the priorities. Initially, his number one priority was finding a resolution to the war in Southeast Asia, the thorn in his side that affected his other top priorities: improving relations with the Soviet Union and China, and using both as leverage against the other, or as it came to be known, triangular diplomacy.

¹⁶⁸ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 170-171.

Throughout 1969 and 1970, however, progress on all three issues was excruciatingly slow. The North Vietnamese remained largely intransigent, agreeing only to continue to talk to the Americans. The Soviet Union balked at Washington's linking of improved relations with the United States, including arms control talks, with Soviet pressure on Hanoi. Nixon relaxed trade restrictions on China, reduced the presence of American naval combatants in the Taiwan Strait, and signaled Beijing, via Romania, that the United States was interested in serious talks. Despite these gestures, there were no important breakthroughs in the American-Chinese relationship.¹⁶⁹

In sum, Kissinger's opportunity to stake a claim to progress on all three fronts did not materialize during the early months of the Nixon White House. His "defining" achievements – détente with the Soviet Union, the opening to China, and the American-North Vietnamese peace treaty, for which he won the Nobel Peace Prize – were still in the future. During the early White House years, then, to enhance his diplomatic credentials and further strengthen his position with the president he would have to look elsewhere.

The Cambodian crisis of the spring of 1970 presented Kissinger with that "elsewhere" opportunity. In April 1970, President Nixon decided to extend the ground war in South

¹⁶⁹ According to Dallek, while Nixon and Kissinger desired "serious talks" with the Chinese, they were uncertain if such actions at the time "would have a useful impact on Moscow." Hence, "they muted their efforts to begin substantive discussions with the Chinese." Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 147.

Vietnam into northeastern Cambodia.¹⁷⁰ He encountered substantial opposition to this decision, which amounted to a major escalation of the conflict. At first Kissinger, along with Laird and Rogers, questioned the operation because they believed, correctly, that its inevitable disclosure would add fuel to the American anti-war movement's fire. Further, all three argued to the president that, over the long run, the invasion would not decisively affect the course of the war.

Still, Nixon was resolute in his belief that it was necessary to save both Cambodia and South Vietnam from the Communists. Kissinger soon retreated from his initial opposition. Despite his concerns, he came around to full support of the operation. He probably believed that in doing so he could not only remain (or perhaps get back) in the president's good graces through a demonstration of his loyalty, but also discredit both Laird and Rogers who remained adamantly opposed to the invasion.¹⁷¹

In the wake of the invasion, some of Kissinger's principal National Security Council assistants, including Roger Morris (of *NSSM 39* fame) and Anthony Lake (*The "Tar*

¹⁷⁰ The objective of this escalation, in which elements of the South Vietnamese Army led the assault but were supported by the United States military, was to drive the North Vietnamese out of eastern Cambodia, disrupt their logistic pipeline to South Vietnam and, in the process, save the pro-Western government of Lon Nol.

¹⁷¹ On Kissinger's "flip flop" position on the invasion, Dallek remarks, "Kissinger was torn between his conviction that direct U.S. involvement in Cambodia was probably unnecessary...and wanting to remain in Nixon's good graces. With Rogers and Laird opposing Nixon's decision, it allowed a compliant Kissinger to become, more than ever, the president's most important adviser." Based on transcripts of Kissinger's telephone conversations, he further notes, "Henry's conversations made clear that one-upping his two rivals was a high priority." Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 197-198

Baby” Option), resigned. Kissinger, however, was convinced that his ultimate loyalty to the president during the Cambodian crisis had significantly advanced his own position with Nixon. He was apparently correct, as he played a leading role in a series of crisis elsewhere during 1970: the revolt of young Palestinian radical refugees against Jordan’s King Hussein, a moderate, pro-American leader in the Arab world, which reached its climax in September; indications that the Soviet Union was building a nuclear submarine base at Cienfuegos, Cuba, raising the possibility that it was preparing to introduce offensive weapons into Cuba; the September elections in Chile which brought the leftist government of Salvador Allende to power.¹⁷²

The resolutions of the first two crises were quick, although the Jordanian crisis nearly escalated into a major regional conflict as Syrian moved militarily in support of the Palestinian uprising and Israel, urged on by the United States, entered the fray. Further, although Kissinger exaggerated the extent of Soviet involvement, there was always a possibility of super-power confrontation because Moscow’s arms client, Syria, supported the Palestinians.

¹⁷² Allende won a plurality of the vote (36.2 percent) over the conservative candidate, Jorge Alessandri (35 percent) and the centrist Radomiro Tomic (27.8 percent). With no candidate garnering a majority, the Chilean constitution provided that the parliament select the new president. According to historian Jussi Hanhimaki, in past situations of this sort, the parliament had always selected the candidate who received the largest percentage of the popular vote, in this case, Allende. Jussi Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 100.

The Black September Crisis

On 17 September 1970, King Hussein launched an offensive against a Palestinian refugee revolt, instigated not by Yassir Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Movement (PLO), but by the smaller, and more radical, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), led by George Habash¹⁷³. Some of the Jordanian attacks came against Palestinian strongholds in the northern area of the kingdom, close to the Syrian border. On 19 September, Syrian tanks, with Palestinian markings, crossed the Jordanian border. King Hussein's army, perhaps assisted by Israeli air strikes, but decidedly supported by the Syria-threatening movement of Israeli armored units into the Golan Heights - an arrangement finessed by Henry Kissinger between the more-than-enthusiastic Israelis and the hesitant Hussein - repelled the attack. By 22 September, the Syrian tanks were in full retreat. On 27 September, Hussein and the PLO's Arafat met in Cairo to resolve the simmering situation with the Jordanian Palestinians. Using the good offices of Egypt's

¹⁷³ Jordan provided a home to Palestinians who were displaced from their homeland following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the 1967 Six Days War. Hussein had offended his somewhat unwelcome guests by tentatively exploring peace negotiations with Israel following the latter war. His "reactionary" policies led to an unsuccessful assassination attempt on his life in June 1970, which in turn, led to a crackdown on Palestinian radicals in Jordan. Besides the threat to his own regime from the Palestinian radicals, Hussein was deeply concerned about the consequences for Jordan's security caused by the PFLP's continuing raids against the West Bank from Jordanian territory. Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 93-94.

Gamal Abdel Nasser, they signed a ceasefire and agreed that the Palestinian army and guerrilla forces would withdraw from Jordan's major cities.¹⁷⁴

Nasser suffered a fatal stroke a day after the signing of the ceasefire. The death of America's long-time Middle Eastern nemesis, coming as it did simultaneously with the defeat of the Syrians and the strengthening of King Hussein's position, seemed to portend an upswing in American fortunes in the Middle East. From Kissinger's viewpoint, they came at the expense of the Soviet Union. "The forces of moderation in the Middle East had been preserved. The King had prevailed by his own courage and decisiveness. Yet these would have been in vain but for his friendship with the United States. The Soviets had backed off, raising by another notch the growing Arab disenchantment with Moscow."¹⁷⁵

Both Nixon and Kissinger viewed the Jordanian crisis as an American "win" over the Soviet Union, although the latter's role in the crisis had ranged from minimal to almost nothing. According to Walter Isaacson, although Kissinger played up the Jordanian-Palestinian-Syrian face off as an East-West showdown, the Soviet Union's principal relationship to the episode was its role as Syria's major arms supplier. Moscow probably

¹⁷⁴ An analysis of the Jordanian crisis, especially its consequences for Soviet and American policies in the Middle East and the boost its resolution gave to the Kissinger foreign policy portfolio, are detailed in Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 93-98. See also Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 285-315, for a day-by-day accounting of the Jordanian crisis (as well as the other September 1970 events in Cienfuegos and Chile).

¹⁷⁵ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 631

stood to gain from the situation if the Palestinians and Syrians had defeated the Jordanian armed forces, and the Soviets might have taken advantage of the situation had the United States and Israel not acted. In the final analysis, however, Isaacson asks (and answers), "But was it truly as much of a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union as Kissinger thought? Probably not. Syria's decision to invade was not instigated by the Soviets, nor was its decision to withdraw due to American pressure on the Soviets." To support this conclusion, among other evidence, he cites Talcott Steelye, then the State Department's director of North Arabian Affairs and an experienced American diplomat, who noted, "Moscow's involvement in fomenting the crisis did not exist to the best of our knowledge. The White House contention that we stood the Soviets down is pure nonsense."¹⁷⁶

The "victory" over the Soviet Union perhaps enhanced American influence in the Middle East and elsewhere – a needed boost to American credibility and leadership, which continued to suffer as a result of the unending and eventually unwinnable war in Southeast Asia. Equally importantly, however, it seemed to demonstrate to Nixon and Kissinger that getting tough, especially where Moscow was involved, if only very indirectly in this case, was of major importance to successful outcomes in the East-West

¹⁷⁶ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 311-312.

global struggle. Within the general Cold War setting, it was, after all, standing up to the Soviet Union that mattered most from the White House's real-politik perspective.

From that same perspective, another lesson learned from the Jordanian crisis was the belief that the Soviet Union's role in the Middle East could, and should, be minimized and that of Israel maximized. Israel's important position in the Middle East was in keeping with the basic elements of the Nixon Doctrine. As explained by Hanhimaki, "Israel, in a sense, was now considered one of the strong regional allies that, according to the principles of the Nixon Doctrine, would maintain regional stability by deterring further Arab adventures through its awesome military might. All the Americans had to do to keep the peace was outclass Soviet military aid to the neighboring Arab countries."¹⁷⁷

Moreover, Kissinger's actions helped to undermine Secretary of State Rogers' own comprehensive, multilateral proposal for peaceful evolution in the Middle East, which by the time of the Jordanian crisis had already come under intense criticism from all

¹⁷⁷ Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 97. Nixon stopped over in Guam during a trip to Asia in mid-1969. In an off-the-record news conference he announced a new approach to American relations with Asia. Nixon formalized the policy in his speech to the nation in early November. As the president explained the doctrine, now global in nature, it included three key points: the United States would honor all its treaty commitments; it would continue to provide a nuclear shield to nations allied with the United States, or any "nation whose survival we consider vital to our security and the security of the region as a whole"; in situations not involving nuclear aggression, the United States would provide military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate. "But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense." Quoted in Kissinger, *White House Years*, 224-225.

concerned.¹⁷⁸ Among other things, the Rogers' Plan called for both the United States and the Soviet Union to broker peace negotiations among the principle Middle Eastern powers. Moscow's key role in the process, especially after the Jordanian crisis, was a non-starter for both the president and Kissinger. Further, as noted by Hanhimaki, the plan was already dead in the water by September 1970, in part because of Kissinger's linkage of progress in the Middle East to progress in Vietnam. Until the Soviet Union demonstrated a commitment to pressuring the North Vietnamese, Kissinger was determined to move slowly, if at all, at trying to resolve the festering crisis in the Middle East.¹⁷⁹

Nixon and Kissinger's early scuttling of the Rogers Plan, followed a year later by the Jordanian crisis in which American unilateral actions devised and initiated by Kissinger, approved by Nixon, and assisted by regional partner, Israel, ostensibly saved the government of pro-American King Hussein, hastened the declining influence both of

¹⁷⁸ President Nixon had allowed Rogers to develop an American strategy for the Middle East, because, according to Hanhimaki, he believed "Kissinger as a Jew could not act impartially when the interest of Israel were concerned." Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 94. The Rogers' Plan may have been far too ambitious given its omnibus nature and the historical animosities of the region. However, Kissinger's own efforts to torpedo the plan, and his jealousy over Rogers' key role as "the" architect of Middle East policy, effectively undermined the project before any serious efforts were made to get it started.

¹⁷⁹ The national security adviser had already sold this position to Nixon by late September 1969, as explained by Hanhimaki. "Kissinger managed to convince Nixon that it was important to tie the Middle East settlement to progress on Vietnam. The United States 'should not move too fast on the Middle East,' Kissinger argued...until the Soviets used their influence in Hanoi...Nixon listened attentively and concluded that Kissinger was right. He promised to 'cool off Rogers' on the Middle East." Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 95. The author references a telephone conversation between Nixon and Kissinger on 24 September as his source.

Rogers and the State Department, generally, in American diplomacy. Thereafter, Henry Kissinger appropriated the role as Nixon's principle adviser on the Middle East.

Nixon and Kissinger's "Cuban Missile" Crisis

Even as the Jordanian crisis was falling off the front page of the American foreign policy agenda, a new crisis was brewing in Caribbean waters only ninety miles off the Florida coast. In June 1970 and continuing throughout the summer, American reconnaissance planes (U-2s) flying over Cuba had photographed construction activities on what appeared to be a large naval facility for support of Soviet nuclear-powered, missile submarines at Cienfuegos. If such was the case, then the Kremlin's action represented a violation of the 1962 Soviet-American understanding that the Soviet Union would not introduce offensive weapon systems into Cuba and the United States would not try to overthrow the Castro regime.¹⁸⁰ Unlike the Jordanian crisis, however, the new "Cuban Missile Crisis" presented the get-tough Nixon-Kissinger team with a real opportunity to square off directly against the Russians.

¹⁸⁰ The existence of a support base for Soviet nuclear-powered submarines in Cienfuegos would extend the on-station time of Soviet missile-carrying submarines operating off the American East Coast. Rather than returning to their Northern Fleet bases, which involved a lengthy transit time when they were out of missile range of targets in the United States, they could instead use the nearby facility for their logistics requirements, including rest and recreation for the crews. The U-2 photographs showed the construction of barracks and a soccer field alongside the submarine facility. Isaacson, however, put the construction at Cienfuegos in the proper perspective, noting that the base was "not a full-fledged submarine base, but rather a semi-permanent support facility designed for stopovers, refueling, and recreation." Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 296.

Interestingly, however, in early August after the administration had deliberately leaked news of the construction activity to the American media, the Soviets confirmed that they would uphold the 1962 understanding. Nixon was satisfied with this assurance and agreed with Rogers that the issue should be handled quietly, avoiding any escalation into a major public confrontation. Nixon's decision apparently preempted any ideas that the more-bellicose Kissinger may have entertained to do just that.

Kissinger, however, was not prepared to let the issue go quietly into that gentle night. He subsequently used an "on background" press briefing in Chicago on September 16 to publicly remark that if the Soviet Union were to use the base as a "depot" for missile submarines, then "That would be a matter we would study very carefully."¹⁸¹ Then, on September 18, he used the U-2 photos of the infamous "soccer field" to impress Nixon's chief of staff, H.R. "Bob" Haldeman, with the gravity of the issue in order to force a meeting with the president. According to Hanhimaki, Kissinger told Haldeman, "These soccer fields could mean war, Bob." When Haldeman asked how that could be, Kissinger responded, "Cubans play baseball. Russians play soccer."¹⁸² In fact, Cubans do play soccer, if not as much as baseball. However, Kissinger's somewhat effected alarmism was largely designed to get an appointment with the president. In this he was

¹⁸¹ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 293.

¹⁸² Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 99.

successful, although Nixon kept to his earlier decision to maintain a low profile on the construction issue.

On September 25, Kissinger's Chicago "on background" remarks resurfaced in the *New York Times*. The article, "Ugly Clouds in the South," by C.L. Sulzberger, and the subsequent Pentagon comments on its contents, blew the lid off the situation and elevated it to a major public issue. Importantly, it gave Kissinger the opportunity to convince the president that it was time (or, from his viewpoint, past time), to challenge the Soviet Union and force them to back down. On that same day, he met twice with the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, impressed him with the seriousness with which the United States viewed the situation, but told Dobrynin the United States desired to "give the Soviets 'a graceful opportunity to withdraw without a public confrontation.'"¹⁸³ Kissinger then left Washington for a scheduled secret meeting with North Vietnamese representatives in Paris. His absence from the White House demonstrated that no matter how seriously, or opportunistically, Kissinger may have viewed the Cuban issue, it was clearly secondary to finding a resolution to the war in Vietnam.

Upon his return on October 6, however, he again met with Dobrynin who handed him an official statement that his country stood by the 1962 understandings, a reiteration of

¹⁸³ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 308.

Moscow's earlier August statement. As in the Jordanian crisis, however, Nixon and Kissinger believed that their "get tough" stance had forced the Soviets' hand and caused them to retreat in the face of American firmness. Although Nixon's preferred course on handling the issue, at least initially, differed substantially from Kissinger's early proclivity to confront the Soviet Union, the national security adviser's dogged persistence eventually won over the hesitant Nixon. Again, Kissinger had outmaneuvered Secretary of State Rogers, with whom Nixon had originally agreed.

In the end, it didn't matter if the Russians had really planned to permanently base missile submarines in Cienfuegos, which they adamantly disavowed, or merely intended to use the Cienfuegos facility to occasionally visit Cuba, show the flag, and provide a brief respite for their submarine crews from their arduous deployment. After the "crisis" disappeared, that was exactly what occurred. The importance to Kissinger resided in the fact that he believed his preferred tough stance toward the Soviets had won the day. As a result, his influence with the president grew stronger, while Rogers' position concomitantly waned. Journalist and author Seymour Hersh attested to this watershed event in the empowerment of Henry Kissinger by observing, "Cienfuegos marked a turning point for Kissinger. He had bypassed an indecisive and election-minded

President to challenge the Russians and win. Whether it was a victory over what actually did exist, or over what he thought might exist in the future, did not matter.”¹⁸⁴

Crisis in Chile

The 4 September 1970 elections in Chile presented Nixon and Kissinger with a different set of circumstances, since it was difficult, even for them, to see the hand of the Soviet Union at work behind the democratic processes that brought Salvador Allende and his broad leftist coalition to power. Moreover, Kissinger’s disregard for the South American continent (and the global southern hemisphere, in general), had led him to conclude, as he told the visiting Chilean foreign minister, Gabriel Valdes, in June 1969, “You come here speaking of Latin America, but this is not important. Nothing important can come from the South. History has never been produced in the South. The axis of history starts in Moscow, goes to Bonn, crosses over to Washington, and then goes to Tokyo. What happens in the South is of no importance.”¹⁸⁵

In September 1970, however, with a very changed situation in the “South,” both came to view the Chilean situation as a serious threat to American national interests, despite a CIA estimate that concluded, “The U.S. has no vital national interest within Chile,” and “The world military balance of power would not be significantly altered by an Allende

¹⁸⁴ Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), 257.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 263.

government.”¹⁸⁶ Apparently disregarding the CIA’s assessment in the same document that Allende posed no likely threat to peace in Latin America, they fixated upon the idea that the president’s personal credibility, as well as that of the United States, would be undermined by the existence of “another Cuba” in the Western hemisphere. Moreover, they believed that American leadership in Latin America and the Organization of American States (OAS) would be sabotaged. As explained by Kissinger, Allende’s “stated goal for over a decade before he became President had been to undermine our position in the entire Western Hemisphere by violence if necessary.” Further, “Nixon was beside himself. For over a decade he had lambasted Democratic administrations for permitting the establishment of Communist power in Cuba. And now what he perceived – not wrongly – as another Cuba had come into being during his own Administration.”¹⁸⁷

According to Kissinger, Allende admired Cuban dictator, Fidel Castro, emulated his vociferous anti-American and anti-imperialism posture, and despite his leadership of the Socialist coalition, was dedicated to installing a totalitarian Marxist-Leninist regime in Chile. As Nixon and Kissinger viewed the developments in Chile within the broader context of the East-West global environment, they constructed a sort of Latin American

¹⁸⁶ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, Intelligence Memorandum, “Situation Following the Chilean Presidential Election,” 4 September 1970; reproduced in Christy Macy and Susan Kaplan, eds., *Documents* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 167. The work is a series of official government documents on CIA activities, compiled under the sponsorship of the Center for National Security Studies.

¹⁸⁷ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 657, 671.

domino theory in which the fate of other Latin American nations, sandwiched between Chile and Cuba, was seriously threatened.¹⁸⁸ They further linked this concern to the increasing political power of Communist parties in Western Europe – the Eurocommunist phenomenon – especially in Italy (and later in Portugal after the April 1974 coup), which they believed threatened American interests in Europe, including most prominently the Atlantic Alliance.¹⁸⁹

In recalling his and the president's belief that Allende would support radical groups among its neighboring states, spreading instability and opening the door for increased

¹⁸⁸ The “domino theory” originated with the Eisenhower Administration and was originally applied to the vulnerability of Asian nations to the Sino-Soviet threat. To prevent what the president and his first Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, believed would be a domino effect if one Asian nation fell to Communist aggression, they designed an alliance structure in Asia, first with South Korea and then Taiwan, eventually culminating in the eight-nation Southeast Asia Treaty Organization of 1954. It is unclear if the president or Dulles first coined the term, “domino theory,” but Eisenhower explained it thusly in April 1954. “You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences.” Paul M. Kattenburg, *The Vietnam Trauma in American Foreign Policy, 1945-1975* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1980), 66, note 20; quoted in Schuler Foerster and Edward N. Wright, eds., *American Defense Policy*, 6th ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 244, note 84.

¹⁸⁹ As explained by Raymond Garthoff, Eurocommunism, a termed which actually wasn't coined until 1975, referred to the participation of Western European Communist parties in the democratic political processes of their respective countries and their sometimes divergence from the Moscow line. This divergence was especially true of the Italian Communist Party, which after World War II, despite the best efforts of the United States to undermine its activities, grew in power and legitimacy. Nixon and Kissinger, and later President Ford, were worried about the increasing independence of the Western European allies, beginning in the late 1960s. However, Eurocommunism, an internal political dynamic, became the major cause of concern in American-Western European relations during the decade of the 1970s. Washington saw it as threatening to American hegemony and leadership within the Atlantic Alliance – indeed, to the future of the Alliance itself. Interestingly, as Garthoff points out, the Soviet Union was equally concerned about the effects of Eurocommunism on Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe and its own leadership of the international Communist movement, then already split and further threatened by the growing power and influence of the People's Republic of China. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, especially 537-555.

Communist penetration, Kissinger evaluated Chile as more dangerous than Cuba.

“Because it was a continental country, Chile’s capacity for doing so was greater by far than Cuba’s, and Cuba had already posed a substantial challenge...Chile bordered Argentina, Peru, and Bolivia, all plagued by radical movements. Allende’s success would have had implications also for the future of Communist parties in Western Europe, whose policies would inevitably undermine the Western Alliance whatever their fluctuating claims of respectability. No responsible President could look at Allende’s accession to power with anything but disquiet.”¹⁹⁰

Seymour Hersh argues that President Nixon was more concerned about the future of American corporate interests in Chile, which he believed would be dangerously threatened by the election of Allende who had called for nationalization of foreign companies operating in Chile. Kissinger, however, was most worried about the effects of Allende’s democratic election and the Chilean acceptance of his presidency – foreshadowing a kind of “Ameri-communism” - on other Latin American states as well as those Western European nations in which indigenous Communist parties were gaining in popularity. Roger Morris, a close Kissinger assistant, told Hersh that Kissinger was “contemptuous” of the business community and not overly concerned with their future prospects in Chile. He was deeply worried about Allende’s election for other reasons.

¹⁹⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 657.

Morris revealed, “I don’t think anybody in the government understood how ideological Kissinger was about Chile. I don’t think anybody every fully grasped that Henry saw Allende as being a far more serious threat than Castro. Allende was a living example of democratic social reform in Latin America. All kinds of cataclysmic events rolled around, but Chile scared him. He talked about Eurocommunism [in later years] the same way he talked about Chile early on.”¹⁹¹

Another NSC aide iterated Morris’ opinion about Kissinger’s near paranoia. The unidentified official recalled “a Kissinger discussion of the Allende election in terms of Italy, where the Communist Party was growing in political strength. The fear was not only that Allende would be voted into office, but that – after his six-year term – the political process would work and he would be voted out of office in the next election. Kissinger saw the notion that Communists would participate in the electoral process and accept the results peacefully as the wrong message to send Italian voters.”¹⁹²

The major worry, then, for Mr. Kissinger, although he would never admit to it, was that his often-times pedantic lectures to Western European leaders on the “grave” dangers inherent in Communist participation in the democratic process would seem hollow if Allende and his leftist coalition accepted defeat at the ballot box in the same manner as they had accepted victory. This, of course, would undermine the administration’s

¹⁹¹ Hersh, *The Price of Power*, 270.

¹⁹² Ibid.

argument, most often voiced by Kissinger, that the nature of the Marxist-Leninist ideology dictated that once in power, the Communists would move to perpetuate their dominance by eliminating the very democratic system and processes that had empowered them. Kissinger used this argument not only to raise the specter of a permanent Communist takeover in Chile, but probably also to send a signal to the occasionally recalcitrant Western Europe allies, some of whose leaders openly questioned Kissinger's warnings about their own Communist parties' participation in electoral politics.¹⁹³

Whatever their primary reasons for their hard-nosed anti-Allende attitude - security for American corporations in Chile or national security - neither Nixon nor his right-hand man on foreign policy took Allende's electoral victory calmly. As history has shown, they were quick to respond to the new "threat" to American interests emanating from the south, with Kissinger remarking during a Forty Committee meeting convened to consider

¹⁹³ In regard to the results of the 1970 Chilean elections, Hersh notes that in mid-September, just after the elections, Kissinger talked off-the-record with a group of mid-Western journalists. He told them, "with apparent conviction, 'I have yet to meet somebody who firmly believes that if Allende wins there is likely to be another free election in Chile.' His real fear, of course, was precisely the opposite: that Allende would work within the democratic process." Ibid. Kissinger's incessant warnings to the Western Europeans that they were essentially "playing with fire" in their acceptance of the legitimacy of indigenous Communist parties began early in the Nixon Administration and continued even after he left public office with President's Ford defeat. In a speech in 1977, for example, following spectacular gains by the Italian Communist party in the June 1976 national elections, Kissinger reiterated his traditional arguments about the dangers of Eurocommunism to Western democracy. "The Communist program - by definition - calls for the radical transformation of society; by the very nature of their beliefs Communists will be driven to bring about institutional changes that would make their ascendance permanent...Only in Western Europe and the United States are there still illusions about the nature of Communist parties." Henry A. Kissinger, "Communist Parties in Western Europe: Challenge to the West" (remarks at the Conference on Italy and Eurocommunism, sponsored by The Hoover Institution and The American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C. June 9, 1977), Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

the Chilean situation, “I don’t see why we need to stand by and watch a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people.”¹⁹⁴

Kissinger’s personal account of the American involvement in Chile during the Allende years depicts the United States’ actions as largely benign. This is a curious portrayal considering the concerns he and Nixon expressed about the dire regional and international effects of the Chilean situation.¹⁹⁵ In actuality, as documented by the public release of government documents on the Chilean situation, American subversive

¹⁹⁴ Hersh, *The Price of Power*, 265.

¹⁹⁵ Kissinger, *White House Years*, especially Chapter XVII, “The Autumn of Crises: Chile,” 651-683. Referring to the 1975 investigations conducted by the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operation (the Church Committee, named for Senator Frank Church, the Select Committee’s Chairman), which investigated CIA activities in Chile, among other places, Kissinger denies any subversive wrongdoing prior to and after the 1970 election. “The ‘covert operations’ never got off the ground. Allende was inaugurated; there was no coup; we had no further contacts aimed at organizing one after October of 1970 (despite some false and misleading innuendos in the Senate report).” *Ibid.*, 677. He also argues that Chile, even after Allende became president, “remained one of the largest recipients of official American aid per capita in Latin America.” *Ibid.*, 682. Perhaps Kissinger never envisioned the release of countless documents that would contradict his assertions of the innocuous posture the United States assumed both before and after Allende’s inauguration. Whatever the case, those documents show that immediately following the election, on 15 September 1970, President Nixon ordered CIA Director Richard Helms, in the presence of Kissinger and Attorney General John Mitchell, armed with \$10,000,000, to take all necessary measures to “save Chile” from Allende and his supporters. Helms was directed to use “the best men we have,” to not involve the American Embassy and to “make the economy scream.” Macy and Kaplan, Doc. 57, “Meeting with President on Chile at 1525 Sept 15 ’70,” 168. In early November, National Security Decision Memorandum 93 (NSDM 93) officially set forth in detail the policy Nixon had hastily conveyed to Director Helms in September. As explained by Hanhimaki, “The administration would try to isolate Chile and seek support for its policy from other countries in the Western Hemisphere, ‘particularly Brazil and Argentina,’ and to ‘establish and maintain close relations with friendly military leaders in the hemisphere.’ In the economic field, U.S. private investment in Chile was to be discouraged; ‘existing guarantees and financing arrangements terminated or reduced’ whenever possible; and international financial institutions were to be pressured into limiting credits and loans to Chile. In addition, private U.S. businesses were to be informed of the government’s ‘concern’ over the implications of Allende’s presidency. In short, as of November 1970, Chile had become a pariah state, a subject of relentless American economic warfare.” Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 104. Hanhimaki’s source is NSDM 93, “Policy towards Chile,” November 9, 1970, National Security Archive Chile Documents.

activities were devastating to that nation's economy and, more importantly, to its democracy.

Immediately after the elections and the legislature's selection of Allende as the president in late October 1970, the United States undertook an intensive, systematic program to undermine the new government, largely through economic warfare.¹⁹⁶ This action, aided and abetted by large American corporations with vested interests in restoring a right-wing government in Chile, at least indirectly helped foment the September 1973 military coup, in which Allende, the democratically elected president, died, allegedly by suicide.

Following the coup, Chile was governed by the repressive and undemocratic military rule of Augusto Pinochet. As noted by historian Odd Arne Westad, the regime, "in spite of its atrocious human rights record – was welcomed by the Nixon Administration which resumed economic aid to Chile in the aftermath of the coup."¹⁹⁷ American efforts to

¹⁹⁶ Between the 4 September elections and the legislature's confirmation of Allende as the new president on 24 October, the United States, operating through a very small number of clandestine CIA agents and the CIA station chief in Santiago, and without the knowledge of the Forty Committee (less Kissinger and CIA Director Helms), attempted to prod certain disaffected members of the Armed Forces to eliminate Salvador Allende. In the process, these elements killed the highly respected Army Chief of Staff, General Rene Schneider. While personally disliking Allende, the general adamantly adhered to Chile's civilian democratic processes and refused to support the attempts to assassinate him. Seymour Hersh's account of this operation is exceptionally detailed and well supported by his many interviews with the people who were actually, and intimately, involved. It reveals much about how the Nixon-Kissinger team conducted foreign policy – in this case, an exceptionally sinister, but unsuccessful, performance by a small party of both American and Chilean misfits and thugs. Hersh, *The Price of Power*, 277-296.

¹⁹⁷ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 201.

disrupt the Chilean economy and, in the process, to destroy Allende's authority and credibility were undoubtedly helped along by Allende's own economic mismanagement, poor leadership and radical domestic and foreign policies. However, Kissinger's remark that "When Allende was finally overthrown, it was by his own incompetence and intransigence," is disingenuous, at best, and belies the significant role of American subversive activities in the overthrow of his government.¹⁹⁸

By the end of 1970, with the Jordanian and Cienfuegos "victories" and a comprehensive plan in place to discredit and undermine the Allende government, Kissinger had good reason to be satisfied with his progress in solidifying his role as the "vicar" of foreign policy. As noted by Isaacson, "he was not yet a celebrity, he did not threaten or challenge the president's authority, but he was clearly in charge of running foreign affairs."¹⁹⁹ During the September crises, Kissinger had not only expanded his responsibilities at the expense of his bureaucratic adversaries, but he had also gained Nixon's trust. In doing so, he earned a leading role in constructing and implementing policies designed to effect "a new structure of peace," as he and Nixon were fond of saying.

¹⁹⁸ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 677. Perhaps the most damning analysis of the American role in destabilizing Chile and the most powerful contradiction of Kissinger's version of the "Allende" story is Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power*, especially Chapter 21, "Chile: Hardball," 258-276, and Chapter 22, "Chile: Get Rid of Allende," 277-296.

¹⁹⁹ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 314.

The New Foreign Policy Paradigm

The Nixon White House's vision of a "new structure of peace" evolved from a variety of real-world conditions. First, the president and Kissinger recognized that the Soviet Union had achieved super-power status as a result of its strategic parity with the United States. Consequently, it had become increasingly dangerous to at least directly confront Moscow, which the United States had been prone to do while it enjoyed strategic superiority. Now, the United States would have to carefully manage the emergence of the Soviet Union as a super power. Secondly, both were alert to the growing strength of China and the escalating hostilities between Beijing and Moscow. Finally, both believed that American credibility had significantly suffered as a result of the United States' inability to win the war in Vietnam. To ensure a leading American role in global politics, it was therefore crucial to restore this critical element of American power. Given these realities, especially that of growing Soviet power and the perception, if not the reality, that American power was on the decline, Nixon and Kissinger opted to fashion a new pattern for American global relations.

Thus was born triangular diplomacy, which involved parallel efforts to improve American relations with the Soviet Union through the détente policy and the "opening" to China, the first step toward official recognition of the Beijing government. Nixon and Kissinger designed their strategy to take advantage of Sino-Soviet animosities and fears,

allowing Washington to use the two Communist nations as leverage against each other.

While the triangular relationship not only accommodated the Soviet Union's super-power status and China's growing strength, it also provided the means for a reassertion of American power and leadership.²⁰⁰

From the Nixon-Kissinger real-politik perspective, the five-year effort to shape a world order more agreeable to the interests of the United States resulted in a number of notable achievements. First, triangular diplomacy was largely successful: détente with the Soviet Union, including strategic arms negotiations, progressed, albeit slowly and with the occasional setback; American-Chinese relations developed favorably after Kissinger's mid-1971 successful brokerage of Nixon's early 1972 "opening to China." Secondly, in early 1973, direct American involvement in Vietnam ended. Thirdly, the September 1973 coup in Chile had prevented, at least in the minds of Nixon and Kissinger, the establishment of a second Marxist-Leninist revolutionary state in Latin America. Finally, Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East after the October 1973 Yom Kippur War ensured a central leadership role for the United States while further weakening Soviet influence in the region.

²⁰⁰ Although Nixon and Kissinger were quick to talk about their "new structure of peace," there really was nothing fresh or original about their strategic paradigm, as argued by historian Robert Beisner. The Kissinger and Nixon efforts "actually amounted to an elaborate design, consistent with the old international structure, to strengthen the role of a United States suddenly beset by Soviet pretensions, North Vietnamese tenacity, OPEC price gouging, and street demonstrations at home." It was, ultimately, no more than an "attempt to shore up American dominance within the familiar containment paradigm." Beisner, "History and Henry Kissinger," 521, 522.

Gaullism, Ostpolitik, and Eurocommunism

The global environment did, however, contain some worrisome aspects for the president and his foreign policy deputy. First among these was the integrity of the Atlantic Alliance. The European allies had grown more independent of American influence through the long years of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Even before the beginning of Soviet-American détente, the West European community, led by De Gaulle's France, had initiated and expanded diverse contacts with both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, a process that eventually led to the Helsinki agreement in 1975.

These actions disquieted Nixon and Kissinger, but during the first five years of the Nixon White House they were most concerned with Western German Chancellor Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik. The impact of this East-oriented policy was magnified by the previous French Gaullist policies that had led, in part, to France's withdrawal from the NATO military structure in 1966. As argued by Raymond Garthoff, a senior fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies program at the Brookings Institution and former diplomat, Kissinger and Nixon "were from the outset suspicious and 'worried' by Brandt's Ostpolitik. They were moved to develop an American détente with the Soviet Union in

part to preclude a West German-led European détente with the Soviet Union from excluding the United States and thus splitting the Western alliance.”²⁰¹

Indeed, Kissinger worried that the long-term objective of the Kremlin was to “Finlandize” Western Europe, thereby escalating Soviet influence in the region while alleviating the threat to the Soviet Union from that front. He expressed these sentiments to the Chinese Foreign Minister during a September 1975 meeting in New York City. After Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua remarked that the Soviet Union had to gain hegemony over Western Europe in order to “control the world,” Kissinger responded, “I agree that the Soviet Union’s long range objective is to turn Western Europe into a kind of Finland. Either they can do it by a direct move against Europe, or they can do it by moves which will demonstrate to Western Europe that they are an irresistible force...The

²⁰¹ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1994), 126-127. The author also notes that it was French President Charles De Gaulle who began the Western European initiatives toward détente with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in mid-1966 with a visit to Moscow, followed in 1967 and 1968 by visits to Poland and Romania, respectively. During the same time frame as De Gaulle’s Moscow journey, the French foreign minister visited several East European countries. As a result of these latter visits, Paris expanded its cultural exchanges with Eastern Europe. For the United States, however, France’s own “eastern-oriented” policy raised serious questions about NATO and the status of American leadership in Western Europe. Garthoff notes, “De Gaulle was not only moving toward the East, he was also moving from the West, so to speak. On his visits in Eastern Europe de Gaulle constantly referred to the problem of a divided Germany, and the generally unsettled state of political affairs between East and West, as ‘a European question,’ to be settled by European nations, pointedly not including the United States or the two alliances, NATO and the Warsaw Pact.” *Ibid.*, 124.

question is whether they might make some move in the Middle East or in the Far East to demonstrate their power to Western Europe.”²⁰²

In essence, Kissinger believed that West European-Soviet détente advanced by independent policies such as France’s Gaullism and West Germany’s Ostpolitik, encouraged by Soviet actions designed to entice or intimidate, and absent strong American involvement and leadership, could eventually lead to a neutralization of all of Western Europe. Such a situation would rupture NATO and the postwar, stable order the alliance had helped establish. Kissinger expressed his and Nixon’s deep concerns about this trend in European policies thusly:

Initially, the Nixon Administration had grave reservations about what Brandt called *Ostpolitik*. With each German state seeking to seduce the other, they might finally come together on some nationalist, neutralist program...Above all, the Nixon Administration feared for the unity of the West. DeGaulle had already broken the West’s united front toward Moscow by pulling France out of NATO and by pursuing his own policy of détente with the Kremlin. Washington viewed the specter of West Germany breaking out on its own with trepidation.²⁰³

²⁰² “Memorandum of Conversation, “Subject: The Soviet Union; CSCE; Europe; Japan; Angola; Indochina; The President’s China Trip; The Global Strategic Situation; Korea,” September 28, 1975, p. 14 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive. Kissinger’s reference to “Finland” is related to the coined term “Finlandization.” The word pertains to the post-World War II arrangement between the Soviet Union and Finland in which the latter, living in the shadow of its much larger and more powerful neighbor, maintained a friendly attitude toward Moscow through truncated foreign and military policies. The former was characterized by non-alignment if not an outright tilt toward Moscow, while the latter essentially amounted to maintaining only a small self-defense force. Finland, then, was neutralized, and posed no threat to the Soviet Union.

²⁰³ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 735.

In addition to this “neutralist” trend, Nixon and Kissinger also worried about Eurocommunism’s effects on the Atlantic Alliance, especially America’s ability to retain its traditional leading role in the partnership if Communist political participation and power in Western Europe continued to grow. In his memoir, *Years of Renewal*, Kissinger discussed the reasons for his and Nixon’s belief that the presence of Communists in Western European governments represented a threat both to the Western alliance and to the democratic processes in member nations. First, they doubted the credibility of the Western European notion that Eurocommunist parties operated independently, and often in opposition to, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Secondly, they rejected the idea that introducing the Communists to democratic processes would somehow transform them into long-term cooperative partners rather than adversaries. Kissinger summarized these thoughts:

The key issue was not the degree of independence of the European Communist Parties from Moscow but their Communist ideology and organization. Neither the internal dynamics nor the electoral programs of the Communist Parties seemed to me compatible with democracy or the established purposes of the Atlantic Alliance. No European Communist Party – not even Italy’s – had supported the Atlantic Alliance. Whatever difficulties their supposed independence might pose for Moscow, a common strategy for the defense of Western democracies was not on their agendas.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 627.

Although strained at times both by what they saw as Western European centrifugal tendencies and the “specter” of Eurocommunism, American-West European relations still remained strong, no doubt strengthened by Nixon’s special attention to Western Europe and the Atlantic Alliance. In his first two years of office, he visited Western Europe twice, perhaps to visibly reassert American leadership through a “showing of the flag” tour de force, and to demonstrate that despite the American attention on the war in Vietnam, the Atlantic Alliance remained the primary commitment.²⁰⁵

By late 1973, then, Nixon and Kissinger, now also the Secretary of State, could consider the extant global arrangement not only more stable and orderly than the one they had inherited in 1969, but also more amenable to the restoration of American credibility and leadership and the promotion of American interests. However, their new structure of peace, with its emphasis on the high stakes game of triangular diplomacy and the East-West dimensions of global politics, left little or no room for consideration of Third World nation state and non-nation state actors. As long as they posed no threat to the status quo, Washington ignored them. However, as the 1970 elections in Chile showed, those like President Allende, who misbehaved by challenging the existing state of affairs, earned the wrath of a vindictive White House.

²⁰⁵ Like Western Europe, relations with Japan had also become somewhat unsettled, but an array of economic, political and military agreements anchored American-Japanese relations. In sum, from the Nixon-Kissinger perspective, the world was a more manageable and orderly system in late 1973 than it had been five years earlier.

Black Sub-Saharan Africa: A Policy of Indifference

The Nixon White House's profound contempt for the Third World was probably matched only by their indifference toward the North-South dimension of international relations. The essence of this attitude was perhaps best captured in Kissinger's less-than-cordial meeting with Foreign Minister Gabriel Valdes, of Chile, in June of 1969, as previously discussed. The latter had lectured President Nixon on Latin America's contributions to American economic wealth. The president apparently took umbrage at this perceived audacity. Kissinger called in his Chilean counterpart to set the record straight. He first told Valdes that he was wasting his time trying to convince the president that "the South" was important to the United States. After Kissinger's brief speech on the historical irrelevance of the South, Valdes countered, "Mr. Kissinger, you know nothing of the South." Kissinger replied, "No...and I don't care."²⁰⁶

The attitude naturally carried over to the more remote and economically backward African continent, especially black sub-Saharan Africa. Importantly, it was also reflected in the adoption of the Option Two policy in early 1970. This was a prime example of a policy of indifference towards "the South," in this case towards Africa's black

²⁰⁶ As quoted in Hersh, *The Price of Power*, 263. Hersh claims that Valdes' meeting with Nixon was tense because the Chilean, instead of presenting a prepared formal policy statement on American-Latin American commercial and economic relations, instead "spoke of the impossibility of dealing with the United States within the framework of inter-American relations; the differences in power were too great...and Nixon was caught off guard...Masking his irritation, Nixon heard Valdes out, and then pulled himself together, lowering his eyelids, becoming impenetrable, withdrawn. Kissinger frowned." Ibid.

nationalists (as discussed in Chapter 1). While the State Department's African Bureau initially opposed the policy and derisively referred to it as the "tar baby" option, according to insider Roger Morris, the bureau and its chief, Assistant Secretary David Newsom, soon came to embrace it. Newsom, in fact, became the leading public advocate of the policy, despite his initial objections to, and concerns about, the implications of Option Two.²⁰⁷

If nothing else, David Newsom was loyal, and with African Affairs largely invisible to the White House, he lasted through Nixon's first term. However, Kissinger, who became Nixon's secretary of state in September 1973, selected Donald Easum as his new assistant for African affairs (AF) in late 1973. Easum was exceptionally well versed in African Affairs, having served three tours of duty in West Africa.²⁰⁸ Moreover, he well informed and sensitive to the liberation struggles in sub-Saharan Africa and closely attuned to the changing dynamics in the region after the April 1974 Portuguese coup and the new leadership's declared intention to decolonize.

Easum, perhaps alone in the top State Department echelons, recognized the post-coup opportunities to enhance American credibility and influence in both black and white

²⁰⁷ Morris, *Uncertain Greatness*, 119. As previously noted, Morris was Kissinger's Africa expert on the National Security Council Staff. He was also one of the principal authors of the 1969 study on American policy in southern Africa, referred to usually as NSSM 39.

²⁰⁸ Easum had made a favorable impression on Kissinger when he directed a special National Security Council study on Latin American from 1969-1971. He was one of Kissinger's first appointments when he finally dislodged William Rogers as Secretary of State in September 1973.

Africa. In October 1974, he expressed these sentiments in a hearing before the House's Subcommittee on Africa. He first praised the Portuguese government for its decision to grant self-determination to its colonies and lauded the assistance provided by African states to the decolonization process. Then, promising American moral and material support for the newly emerging states, Easum noted, "The United States is also looking forward to establishing and strengthening mutually beneficial relations," with each of Portugal's former colonies.²⁰⁹

Easum tried valiantly, if unsuccessfully, to change the direction of American policy in the region. He not only urged Washington's full support for Portugal's decolonization efforts, but also advocated a stronger stance against South Africa and Rhodesia. His efforts fell on deaf ears as Kissinger disregarded his advice. From his geo-strategic perspective, Africa was part of "the South," of minimal import on the global stage and deserving of neither his time nor consideration so long as those in the region behaved themselves. British journalist Bruce Oudes, one of many admirers of Easum, observed that the AF position, and by inference, Africa, were so low on Kissinger's priority list

²⁰⁹ Department of State, "Department Discusses Decolonization of Portuguese African Territories: Statement by Donald B. Easum, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs," *The Department of State Bulletin* LXXI, no. 1844 (October 28, 1974): 586-587. While the United States did officially recognize both Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, after much prodding from Donald Easum, American relations with both remained distant and cool, and neither enjoyed "mutually beneficial relations" with the United States. However, the real tragedy in the Portuguese decolonization process occurred in Angola, the largest colony in population and size and by far the richest in natural resources. There, high expectations for the future were crushed by increasingly violent fratricidal warfare, which was aggravated by regional and international interference, including that of the United States.

that “At no time...did Kissinger call in Easum for a general philosophical discussion of how Africa fits in the global scheme of things. Easum’s only access to Kissinger was via staff meetings, one-page nightly ‘report cards’ on the day’s activities, and tightly worded cables when Kissinger was out of town.”²¹⁰

Despite the lack of attention from the Secretary, who openly derided his African advisor as “Mr. Guinea-Bissau,” Easum apparently believed in the old adage that the squeaky wheel gets the grease.²¹¹ In the late fall of 1974, he departed on a trip to southern Africa in what Oudes has described as “one of the most effective diplomatic missions to Africa in the 16-year history of the State Department’s African Bureau.”²¹² The Assistant Secretary’s attempts to subtly modify American policy in the region during that sojourn almost certainly caught the Secretary of State’s attention, especially comments such as: “We are using our influence to foster change in South Africa – not to preserve the status quo,” made in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on November 2, 1974. The next day in Lusaka, Zambia, Easum referred to the recent American veto of the South African expulsion vote in the UN. This issue “will certainly arise at some time again in

²¹⁰ Bruce Oudes, “the Sacking of the Secretary,” *Africa Report* 20, no. 1 (January-February 1975): 17.

²¹¹ In mid-1974, before Guinea-Bissau’s formalized independence from Portugal, the nation had already been recognized by over 80 countries and had applied for UN membership. Easum repeatedly recommended to Kissinger that the United States not veto Guinea-Bissau’s entry into the United Nations, for which he earned the Kissinger-bestowed nickname, “Mr. Guinea-Bissau.” Easum won the day on this issue, but only after the country’s formal independence in September 1974. The United States then voted for its admission to the UN.

²¹² Oudes, “The Sacking of the Secretary,” 17.

the future and I would imagine that the degree to which South Africa has made meaningful changes will determine the stances that various countries will take on the expulsion issue at that time.” Even though neither comment theoretically violated the spirit of the “communication” policy, they apparently did not sit well with the Secretary of State.²¹³

Adding insult to injury, at least from Washington’s viewpoint, during his visit to Tanzania, and later in Mozambique, Easum also met with Samora Machel, the FRELIMO leader. According to Oudes, the assistant secretary “carried out a surprisingly successful piece of personal diplomacy.”²¹⁴ Recalling the Nixon-Kissinger conversation over the latter’s angst when then Secretary of State Rogers completed his own reportedly successful African tour in 1970, it is not a tremendous leap of logic to suggest that Kissinger may have again felt upstaged.

Revolving-Door Assistants

By the time of Easum’s trip to southern Africa, the State Department had authorized contacts between its Chief of Missions and the various nationalist groups in the Portuguese colonies, such as FRELIMO. Moreover, the Portuguese had agreed to grant

²¹³ Ibid., 18.

²¹⁴ Ibid. See also Bruce Oudes, “US Sacks its Africa Adviser,” the *Observer* (London), December 22, 1974, 2.

Mozambique's full independence in June 1975, having established a transitional government in September 1974 to oversee the decolonization process. Thus, Easum's contacts with Machel and his visit to Mozambique should not have ruffled any feathers in Washington. Yet upon his return in late November 1974, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll informed Easum that he was being relieved of his duties and "rewarded" with the ambassadorship to Nigeria.

There is no one incident in Easum's brief tenure as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs that stands out as the main reason for his early departure from the position. Rather, it appears that Kissinger desired a more compliant advisor who would dutifully carry out policy, leaving the Secretary of State free to deal with more important global issues. Easum was careful to use the rhetoric of the "communication" policy, even while delicately deviating from the actual intent of the policy. Then too, for a brief moment, he occupied center stage in American foreign policy as his speeches during his African trip generated international recognition and praise, stealing the spotlight from global architect Kissinger. As Bruce Oudes wrote, from Washington, "Many observers here – both left and right, black and white – were struck by Kissinger's monumental rigidity in the Easum affair. All he had to do was to sit back and slowly

gather unto himself the credit for Easum's highly professional diplomacy. But, as one diplomat here put it, 'There are no little Kissingers.'"²¹⁵

The good will and credibility for American policy that Easum generated during his regional tour quickly dissipated as Kissinger officially announced, in early January 1975, that Easum would be replaced by the former ambassador to Chile, Nathaniel Davis, who entered the office under a cloud of allegations about his purported role in the overthrow of Salvador Allende.²¹⁶ Davis' appointment was widely criticized in Africa, not only because he had little professional experience on the continent, but also because his connection with Chile labeled him, in the minds of many Africans, as the front man for American political destabilization policies.²¹⁷ However, according to Roger Morris, Davis ostensibly possessed an important trait, at least from Kissinger's perspective, that his predecessor did not. As reported by one State Department official, "We knew from Chile...That Davis was somebody who could follow orders."²¹⁸

As with the case of Donald Easum, however, Kissinger became rapidly disillusioned with his new principle African advisor, accusing Davis of manipulating the department's

²¹⁵ Oudes, "The Sacking of the Secretary," 18.

²¹⁶ Davis continues to deny he had any role in Allende's overthrow. He notes that "Senator Frank Church and his Select Committee on Intelligence investigated my role in Chile during the Allende time, and the Senator concluded that I 'never appeared to have actively engaged in covert efforts to subvert the elected government of Chile.'" Nathaniel Davis, "The Angola Decision of 1975: A Personal Memoir," *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 1 (Fall 1978): 109.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

²¹⁸ Roger Morris, "The Culture of Bureaucracy: A Rare Resignation in Protest: Nat Davis and Angola," *The Washington Monthly* 7, no. 12 (February 1976): 26.

administrative processes to withhold information on Angola as that colony moved toward independence in 1975.²¹⁹ As previously discussed, on January 22 1975, the Forty Committee, chaired by Kissinger, had authorized \$300,000 in “political support” to Holden Roberto’s FNLA. As the debate on whether the United States should become more involved in Angola continued, Davis began to exhibit an independence of mind that not only irritated the Secretary of State, but also caused him to question Davis’ loyalty.

The final straws in the demise of Kissinger’s second Assistant Secretary for African Affairs came in a series of memoranda that Davis wrote between May 1 and July 17, 1975. In each of these, some sent to directly to Kissinger and others to Under Secretary of State, Joseph J. Sisco, but with Kissinger as a copy to addressee, Davis strongly urged that the United States seek a diplomatic solution to the Angolan crisis, which by July had escalated to the point of full-fledged civil war.²²⁰

Davis’s last expression of dissent on the Angolan question, on July 17, came just before President Ford authorized the initial and ostensibly covert allocation of \$6 million to both the FNLA and Jonas Savimbi’s UNITA, a sum that quickly grew to \$32 million

²¹⁹ Kissinger opined, “The most difficult task for any Secretary of State is to impose a sense of direction on the flood of papers that at any moment threatens to engulf him. The system lends itself to manipulation. A bureau chief who disagrees with the Secretary can exploit it for procrastination. For example, in 1975 the Assistant Secretary in charge of Africa managed to delay my dealing with Angola by nearly ten weeks because he opposed the decision he feared I would make. He simply used the splendid machinery so methodically to ‘clear’ a memorandum I had requested that it took weeks to reach me; when it arrived it was diluted of all sharpness and my own staff bounced it back again and again for greater precision – thereby serving the bureau chief’s purposes better than my own.” Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 440.

²²⁰ Davis, “A Personal Memoir,” 111-116.

by November 1975, as I will discuss later. When Davis received word of the president's decision, he submitted his resignation, but continued his service with the State Department as ambassador to Switzerland. State Department sources told Roger Morris that Kissinger was irritated with Davis even before the Angolan memoranda, and that Davis had already lost influence with the Secretary even though he had been onboard for only a few months. The memoranda convinced Kissinger "that Angola would be one Chile too many for Nat."²²¹

Kissinger's first two African Bureau chiefs had come and departed Foggy Bottom within less than a two-year time frame. It is immaterial whether they were pressured to resign or did so voluntarily – or a little of both - because of fundamental disagreements with the Secretary. Given Kissinger's indifference to events in sub-Saharan Africa – an area of no importance to his global architecture - neither possessed the power or influence to convince the Secretary of State that Washington needed to reassess its policy toward the region.

The Winds of Change

By early 1974, the Nixon-Kissinger effort to create a new structure of peace and "to keep the present world going as long as possible," was showing signs of strain. That trend accelerated throughout the year. On the global level, progress in improving

²²¹ Morris, "The Culture of Bureaucracy," 29-30.

relations with both China and the Soviet Union, despite the Vladivostok arms agreement with the latter in November, slowed, and eventually stalled. Triangular diplomacy, especially détente with the Soviet Union, came to a near standstill partly as a result of domestic events. These included, first and foremost, the far-reaching consequences of Watergate upon presidential power. Moreover, the election of a Democratic-led Congress in the fall of 1974 - one largely determined to rein in executive latitude in foreign policy and to avoid another Vietnam - contributed to the decline of the “imperial presidency” and to the weakening of the Cold War bi-partisan consensus in Congress.²²² Finally, criticisms of détente from both left and right of the political spectrum intensified with presidential hopefuls Republican Ronald Reagan and “Hawkish” Democratic Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson leading the charge.²²³

²²² The comparison between early American involvement in Vietnam and Angola was a central argument in the late 1975 congressional debate over the Tunney Amendment (to the Defense Appropriations bill), which cut off further short-term funding to the American-backed factions in Angola, and the subsequent Clark Amendment of early 1976, which imposed a long-term ban on funding to both the FNLA and UNITA via the Foreign Assistance Act. The Clark Amendment was repealed during the Reagan Administration. As reported by British journalist Robert Moss, “Senator after Senator recalled the anguish of Vietnam, the peril of getting sucked into another quagmire, the hopelessness of trying to shape events in a far-off place of which Americans knew nothing.” Robert Moss, “Moscow’s Next Target in Africa: Paying the Price for Angola,” *The Sunday Telegraph* (London), February 20, 1977, 8. I reviewed the debate over the Tunney Amendment in the December 1975 *Congressional Record*, and Mr. Moss’s account of the often-made comparisons between Vietnam and Angola is accurate.

²²³ Both 1976 presidential contenders criticized détente as a one-way street in which the United States catered to and condoned Soviet expansionism while handcuffing itself. They also accused the administration of negotiating away American strategic superiority. Moreover, Senator Jackson believed that granting Most Favored Nation status to the Soviet Union in trade relations should be linked to Soviet concessions on Jewish emigration. To that end, in 1973 he introduced the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to The Trade Reform Act. The Act and its amendment eventually passed both houses of Congress in 1974.

While it is not my intention to focus on these domestic determinants of American foreign policy, it is obvious that in the aftermath of the Watergate crisis, they played a major role in the weakening of the Oval Office's previously accorded dominion over diplomatic matters.²²⁴ Thus, I will address them as they pertain to or impinge on the Ford-Kissinger effort to reassert presidential prerogatives during the Angolan crisis.

In August 1974, the unelected Vice President Gerald R. Ford entered the White House under extremely difficult domestic circumstances. These were exacerbated by the rapid and humiliating end to the decades-long American intervention in Southeast Asia. Despite the new political realities of the post-Watergate and post-Vietnam era, President

President Ford signed the bill, which included a variety of global trade and tariff provisions, on January 3, 1975, but indicated his objection to the amendment, remarking, "I must express my reservations about the wisdom of legislative language that can only be seen as objectionable and discriminating by other sovereign states." Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 512.

²²⁴ The historiography of Cold War American foreign policy, as observed by historian Jussi M. Hanhimäki, a Bernath Memorial lecturer for the Society of Historians of American Foreign Policy, is notably lacking in examinations of the influence of domestic politics on foreign policy. See Jussi M. Hanhimäki, "Global Visions and Parochial Politics: The Persistent Dilemma of the 'American Century'," *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 4 (September 2003): 423-447. However, there have been a few solid studies on this neglected area. Thomas J. Noer concluded in his study on the Ford administration's response to the Angolan crisis that domestic politics are almost always significant, and at times dominant, in the making of American foreign policy. Thomas J. Noer, "International Credibility and Political Survival: The Ford Administration's Intervention in Angola," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (Fall 1993): 771-785. Another good analysis of the link between the domestic political environment and foreign policy is historian Robert David Johnson's "The Unintended Consequences of Congressional Reform: The Clark and Tunney Amendments and U.S. Policy toward Angola," *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 2 (April 2003): 215-243. Noer's work is very broad in scope and includes an analysis of Watergate, the 1976 presidential election, investigations of the Central Intelligence Agency, and the increasing attacks on détente from domestic critics of the policy. Johnson's work focuses on the evolution of the Cold War congressional culture as the legislative branch sought to re-assert itself into the mainstream of foreign policy decision-making. Both use the Angolan crisis of 1974-1976 as a timely case study to examine the executive branch's ability to conduct foreign policy in the aftermath of Watergate and Vietnam.

Ford would try to build upon what he saw as his predecessor's successes in creating "a new foundation for peace." Like Kissinger, the new president believed that America's long and unsuccessful involvement in Vietnam had weakened American credibility to the point where, as he tells us in his memoirs, "many old friends and neutrals were moving away from us." However, Nixon's initiatives toward Moscow and Beijing had "defused the trend against us," and "U.S. prestige begin to rise again." It was his intention to continue that upswing, assisted by Henry Kissinger, whose global real-politik perspective had impressed Ford during eight months of weekly briefings as the Watergate affair ran its course.²²⁵

Conclusion

Besides the empowerment of Henry Kissinger, the first two years of the Nixon White House, especially during the Cambodian and fall crises of 1970, also reveal much about the geo-strategic mind set and decision-making style of the president and his principal deputy on foreign policy. First, at the global level, they situated every crisis, no matter how insignificant or peripheral to American interests, within the East-West struggle. This perspective pertained even if there was only a remote possibility that the Soviet Union, or one of its alleged client states, was involved. Their near obsession with the "Communists" stemmed from the belief (sometimes warranted) that Moscow and its so-

²²⁵ Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1979), 128-129.

called proxies were continually seeking to gain geo-political advantages at the expense of the United States. It also reflected their zero-sum approach to power politics. Any perceived “win” for the Communists became a “loss” for the United States, and vice versa. Within this Manichean world view, there was very little room for their recognition or acceptance of nationalist Leftist movements or non-alignment in global affairs.

To dissuade alleged Soviet or Soviet-sponsored adventurism, they considered it essential for the United States to display toughness, often, but not always, in the form of violent action. Their hard-nosed approach became the *sine qua non* for rescuing American credibility. The Cambodian crisis of the spring of 1970 provides such an example. While the South Vietnamese provided the majority of the ground forces, they were heavily supported by the United States military. Despite his adviser’s warnings about the domestic backlash from the invasion, Nixon was convinced that the military operation, even if successful only in the short term, would signal to the Cambodian and North Vietnamese Communists that the United States was determined to play hard ball. Moreover, it helped to demonstrate the American commitment to the pro-American governments of both Cambodia and South Vietnam.

In contrast, the Cienfuegos crisis was a case of tough talk since threatening or using military force against the submarine facility could raise the stakes to a nuclear confrontation. Supported by Secretary of State Rogers, Nixon was at first reluctant to

publicly confront the Soviet Union, especially after Moscow had privately stated its intention, in August 1970, to abide by the 1962 understanding regarding no offensive weapons in Cuba. However, Kissinger's more belligerent posture eventually won out. His public declarations on the gravity with which Washington viewed the issue, as well as his frank talks with Ambassador Dobrynin in September and early October, after which the Soviets reiterated their adherence to the 1962 agreement, apparently convinced the White House that the Soviets had "retreated" on the issue only because of the resolute American stance.

In the era of the Nixon Doctrine, with a strategically powerful Soviet Union, the propensity to confront the "Communists" most often meant either reliance upon covert operations or a strong regional ally supplied with American arms, rather than direct American military involvement. The sabotage of the Allende government and the Israeli involvement in the Jordanian crisis, in which Syria became the token Soviet client state, exemplified these two aspects of the Nixon Doctrine, respectively. Moreover, as had been the case in the Cuban crisis, in the Middle East, the White House was convinced that American toughness had forced the Soviet Union to back down.²²⁶

²²⁶ In his memoirs, Nixon tells us that he was satisfied that the three-year covert effort against Allende had eventually helped in his demise. Still, he regretted that the United States had been unable to prevent Allende from coming to power in October 1970. As he recalled, "At least in 1970 in Jordan and Cuba, their [the "Communists"] probing had encountered our unmistakable steel." Richard M. Nixon, *RN* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), 490; quoted in Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 313.

Their confrontational tendencies also led President Nixon and Kissinger to overstate not only the extent of Soviet involvement, as in the Jordanian crisis, but also to exaggerate the outcome to show that American firmness had caused the other side to blink first. In that sense, then, the Soviet Union became the whipping boy for the White House's attempts to visibly demonstrate American credibility and leadership and their personal competence in foreign affairs.

Secondly, at the national level, Nixon and Kissinger were committed to consolidating all foreign policy decision making in the White House. For the most part, this meant circumventing those bureaucracies most concerned with international affairs, the State and Defense Departments, as much as possible. Among other devices, they used a variety of ad hoc communications methods, generally termed "back channel," to cut off both organizations from the main flow of critical information. Back-channel communications allowed the White House to control and limit access to information, while ostensibly preventing leaks. More importantly, from the Oval Office perspective, it restricted the influence of the "uninformed" departments and their respective leaders, making it easier to ignore them.

The three-year effort to destroy the Allende government provides an example of this characteristic of White House foreign policy making. Nixon did not want either the State Department, including the American ambassador in Santiago, or the Department of

Defense even marginally involved in the covert operation. Kissinger, in effect, became the president's back-channel means for controlling the program. The national security adviser acted as Nixon's point man with the CIA's Deputy Director of Plans, Thomas Karamessines, who was responsible for overseeing the operation on behalf of the White House.²²⁷

Finally, at the personal level, Nixon's desire to control foreign policy from the Oval Office and to limit decision making to a small inner circle, a passion shared by Kissinger, ensured the latter's growing influence in diplomatic affairs, while at the same time diminishing that of both Rogers at State and Laird at Defense. Nixon appreciated Kissinger's real-politik perspective, which essentially mirrored his own. Moreover, Kissinger's loyalty and hard-nosed approach to the crises of 1970 further strengthened his foreign policy credentials with the frequently truculent president.

Henry Kissinger would carry these lessons learned from his Nixon White House years with him to the Ford presidency. Both the substance and style of his geo-strategic perspective would dominate American foreign policy throughout the Ford Administration, even though the new administration faced a very different domestic political climate and a changing global environment. The continuity would manifest itself both in Washington's reaction to the Portuguese coup of April 1974 and the ensuing

²²⁷ Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 235.

leftward tilt of the new regime, and in American decision-making on the growing instability in Angola in the aftermath of Lisbon's decision to grant independence to its African colonies. Because of its policy of indifference towards sub-Saharan Africa, as discussed, most of official Washington failed to recognize, or simply ignored, the fact that the status quo was about to change in southern Africa, and that this affected the premises upon which the Option Two policy had been based. Those who tried to make this point, especially Mr. Easum, were disregarded or dismissed. .

To comprehend the difficulties of Angola's violent decolonization process, which included multiple foreign military interventions, it is first necessary to have an understanding of the extremely volatile and mercurial situation in Portugal itself. Lisbon's post-coup political instability in 1974, which continued throughout most of 1975, adversely affected its ability to adequately manage the Angolan situation.

It is also important to understand Angola's unique place in the Lusitanian empire and its own internal political dynamics, which included a very sizable white settler population and three competing black national liberations that disliked each other as much as they disliked the Portuguese. These circumstances made Angola very different from Portugal's other two major African colonies, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. They complicated Angola's path to independence and provided a great potential for external interference in its decolonization process. The following two chapters will address all

these issues as well as the Ford Administration's attitude and policy toward Portugal during its lengthy political crisis and the related issue of decolonization, especially that of Angola.

CHAPTER 3

1974: PORTUGAL IN CRISIS

“We have no desire to construct a neocolonial community.”
MFA Officer²²⁸

“The need in Portugal, as I see it, is to keep a very cool approach in a situation whose alarmist aspects could well be over-stated.”
Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield²²⁹

This chapter will briefly explain the circumstances that precipitated the Portuguese coup of April 25, 1974. These included the seemingly endless and unwinnable colonial wars in Africa that added to the growing widespread discontent within Portugal’s Armed Forces. The revolt was led by a small group of junior officers calling themselves the Armed Forces Movement (MFA). Most had served lengthy tours in the African colonies where many became radicalized. I will also review, again briefly, the volatile political situation in Portugal in the first few months following the coup as Lisbon entered a period of instability and crisis. This time frame was most notably punctuated by the power struggle between the moderates in the MFA and their military and civilian supporters and the more radical officers, largely supported by the Portuguese Communist

²²⁸ As told to French journalist Jean Daniel of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, and quoted in Kenneth Maxwell, “Portugal and Africa: The Last Empire,” in *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940-1960*, eds. Prosser Gifford and William Rogers Louis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 359.

²²⁹ “Letter from Senator Mike Mansfield to President Ford, Subject: Report from Senator Mike Mansfield Concerning the Situation in Portugal,” August 22, 1975, p. 7, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Portugal (5), Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.

Party, over the direction of Lisbon's political future and the status of its African colonies. The MFA was committed to independence for the African colonies and quickly announced its intentions to decolonize. However, the issue, especially the direction and pace of the path to independence, divided Portuguese politics following the coup and contributed to the rise and fall of a succession of provisional governments, with each one becoming increasingly left-leaning in its political orientation.

I will also discuss the American attitude and response to the Portuguese coup, the ensuing mercurial political situation, and the decolonization issue. Washington viewed these events, especially the leftward tilt of the succeeding provisional governments, with great trepidation. American relations with Portugal, its NATO ally, had been close during the Nixon Administration, in part the result of Washington's Option Two policy toward southern Africa, as discussed in Chapter 1. Moreover, President Nixon was especially grateful for Portugal's support for the American efforts to re-supply Israel during the October 1973 Middle East War. He sent Henry Kissinger to Lisbon in late 1973 to express Washington's appreciation for the use of the Azores air facilities during the war.²³⁰

²³⁰ Kissinger's Lisbon visit followed an earlier meeting with the Portuguese foreign minister in Brussels, Belgium on December 9, 1973. Of concern to both parties at the time was not only the consequences of Portuguese support for the United States during the Yom Kippur war (the Arab oil boycott, for example, included Portugal), but impending negotiations over continued American access to the Azores, especially the air base at Lajes, whose lease was scheduled to expire in early February 1974. Foreign Minister

The April 1974 coup and the subsequent changes in Portugal's political direction disrupted Washington's tight-knit relationship with Lisbon. Moreover, although the Portuguese decision to free its African colonies undermined the assumptions of the Option 2 policy, the White House's "business as usual" response proved ineffective in accurately assessing the significantly changed regional dynamic in southern Africa, thereby contributing to the ill-advised decision to intervene in the Angolan conflict.

Prelude to a Coup

When Kissinger met with Portuguese Prime Minister Marcello Caetano in December 1973, the Portuguese coup was nearly five months in the future and the Angolan crisis was still on the distant horizon. Nevertheless, events were coalescing that would ultimately bring independence to that nation as well as Portugal's other African colonies – Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, San Tome and Principe, and Mozambique. Not the least of these historical junctures was the publication of General Antonio de Spínola's book,

Patricio used this opportunity to ask for American anti-aircraft missiles for use in Africa where, he argued, "In the past the U.S. has said about the agreement that it could not go further in meeting our needs because of public opinion. We accepted that at the time, although we felt that the embargo against equipment was unfair and led to an imbalanced situation because of the constant flow of modern Soviet equipment to our opponents. However, in the last two years the situation has evolved. Now, we can be attacked by air in Guinea and Cabinda. We depend on Cabinda for oil." Kissinger's reply was "You need Hawk missiles." The conversation concluded with Kissinger's promise to attempt to provide such missiles, via Israel perhaps, despite the restriction on Portuguese use of American arms in her African colonies. The deal was never consummated, however, as four and one-half months later the MFA overthrew the government of Marcello Caetano. Memorandum of Conversation, "Subject: Secretary's Bilateral Discussion with Portuguese Foreign Minister, December 9, 1973," pp. 4-5, White House Country Files – Portugal, Box 701, Vol. II, National Archives and Record Administration (NARA), College Park, MD.

Portugal and the Future, in February 1974. The book was highly critical of Portugal's African wars. It argued that a political, not military, solution was the only way for Portugal to extricate itself from the colonial struggles while still maintaining influence in the overseas territories. Spínola, then Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, had previously served in Guinea-Bissau as governor and commander-in-chief of the territorial forces. Upon his return to Portugal in 1973, he was awarded the country's highest military decoration. The fact that the government of Prime Minister Caetano allowed the general's book to be published spoke to Spínola's stature and immense popularity among Portugal's citizenry.

While the general public enthusiastically received *Portugal and the Future*, its publication worried extreme right-wing forces in the Caetano regime. As a result, on March 14, the prime minister met with the leadership of his military forces to obtain an oath of loyalty to his regime. Spínola refused to take the pledge. His immediate superior, General Francisco da Costa Gomes, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces who had endorsed Spínola's book, also refused. Consequently, Caetano dismissed General Spínola from his position on 15 March 1974, along with General Costa Gomes.²³¹ The

²³¹ According to journalist Jose Shercliffe, the greatest consternation over Spínola's book came from within Portugal's "ultra right-wing circles and President Tomas who had urged his dismissal." Jose Shercliffe, "Sad Last Chapter to a General's Book," *The Times* (London), March 16, 1974, p. 4. Journalist and author, Tad Szulc, supports this view. In his analysis of the rise to power of the junior officer-dominated Armed Forces Movement (MFA), he argues, "Caetano had dismissed Costa Gomes and Spínola, considered as too

generals' dismissals added to the widespread excitement caused by Spínola's book and sparked the growing discontent within the Portuguese military, triggered in part by the seemingly endless and unwinnable colonial wars.

Restiveness within the armed forces centered on a small group of junior officers, most of whom had served lengthy tours in the African colonies where many became radicalized.²³² Originally calling themselves the Movement of Captains when they covertly formed in the summer of 1973, they subsequently changed their name to the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), probably to accommodate the more senior officers who joined, or at least condoned, the actions of the original group of coup makers. General Spínola was in the group of condoners.

liberal in terms of the existing Lisbon establishment, to fend off a coup that a group of ultra rightist generals were planning against him, coinciding with the MFA conspiracy. The 'ultras,' allied with Admiral Americo Tomas, the president, wanted to remove Caetano largely because he allowed Spínola to publish his book, *Portugal and the Future*... The book became a best seller overnight; Spínola became the hero of the young officers who had been preparing their revolution since December 1973." Tad Szulc, "Lisbon and Washington: Behind the Portuguese Revolution," *Foreign Policy* 21 (Fall – Winter 1975-76): 18-19.

²³² The continuing African wars were but one of many grievances which motivated the coterie of no more than 200 captains and majors to form the MFA in mid-1973. As analyzed by Kenneth Maxwell, the junior officer corps also directed their increasing anger at issues concerning pay, promotions and loss of prestige, the latter at least in part due to the army's inability to quash the African liberation movements and its humiliation in Goa at the hands of the Indian army. These were aggravated by the group's perception (a correct one) of widespread corruption among the officer corps' upper echelons and by class frictions between the lower and upper ranks. Moreover, these junior officers were the ones who bore the brunt of the African wars where, they discovered, they had more in common with those they were fighting than with those in the metropole who had sent them to fight. Maxwell wrote that one MFA officer, who had spent more time in Africa than in Portugal, observed, "We were at war... with people who speak the same language. We had little sense of racial difference, much less of culture. Badly supplied, badly equipped, very quickly we came to resemble the guerrillas." Another discussion with a different member of the MFA revealed that, "Long conversations with prisoners were 'truly a political initiation.'" Kenneth Maxwell, "The Hidden Revolution in Portugal," *The New York Review of Books* XXII, no. 6 (17 April 1975): 30-31.

Disgruntlement within the military was but a symptom of a profound malaise within Portuguese society, writ large. The structural context within which the armed forces operated consisted of a stagnated economy, a repressive political system that tolerated little or no opposition, and a population whose political freedoms and human rights were increasingly restricted. These socio-economic conditions persisted, despite Prime Minister Caetano's promises of economic and political reform upon his succession to office in 1968 following the incapacitation and subsequent death (in 1970) of his predecessor, Antonio de Oliveira Salazar.²³³ The colonial wars only served to exacerbate Portugal's societal illnesses.

Instead of improvement following Caetano's ascension to power, Portugal's situation, especially in the economic sphere, continued to deteriorate as the colonial wars consumed more and more of the nation's dwindling material and manpower wealth. By the 1974 military coup, then, Portugal was Western Europe's poorest country, little more than a

²³³ Gerald Bender's analysis of the military coup in Portugal notes that, "When Marcello Caetano assumed power in September 1968, he offered Portugal the hope that he, and the new faces he brought with him, could solve the major social, economic, and political ills –including the colonial problems –which plagued the tiny country." During his first year in office, "Caetano looked and sounded like a radical in comparison with his predecessor." However, the regime proved unable, or unwilling, to resolve the pathological problems, including the colonial wars, which continued to plague the nation. Gerald J. Bender, "Portugal and Her Colonies Join the Twentieth Century," *Ufahamy* IV, no. 3 (Winter 1974): 121.

Third World nation itself.²³⁴ While the coup itself was fomented and carried out by a small group of radical and highly politicized officers, Portugal's economic, political and social difficulties provided a ripe revolutionary environment for the coup makers. Thus, this military coup, as noted by journalist Tad Szulc, "quickly developed symptoms of a disorderly but deep social revolution."²³⁵

The Coup and its Aftermath

Prime Minister Caetano's ouster of both General Spínola and Costa Gomes on March 15 immediately led to a premature, and unsuccessful, coup attempt the next day, when some 300 members of an infantry regiment headquartered at Caldas da Rainha, just north

²³⁴ Kenneth Maxwell's interviews with several of the MFA leaders make clear that Portugal, compared to Western Europe, was severely underdeveloped in its socio-economic and political life. In that sense, it was not unlike its colonies. For example, one officer noted, "What we saw was that Portugal was itself part of the third world. Lisbon and Oporto were an illusion, the country within was underdeveloped with an illiterate and exploited peasantry." Maxwell, "The Hidden Revolution in Portugal," 31. Historian Gerald J. Bender observed that Portugal's expenditure on defense, especially the costs of maintaining troops in the colonies where they continued to struggle with the ever-growing insurgencies, consumed 40-50% of the national budget and an increasing number of its young men who were conscripted to fight in the colonies. Gerald J. Bender, "The Limits of Counterinsurgency: An African Case," *Comparative Politics* 4, no. 3 (April 1972): 331. Among the rich historiography of the multifarious reasons for and consequences of the Portuguese coup, I found the following studies of particular value: Gerald J. Bender, "Portugal and Her Colonies Join the Twentieth Century: Causes and Implications of the Military Coup," *Ufahamy* IV, no. 3 (Winter 1974): 121-162; Norrie MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 1997; Kenneth Maxwell, "The Hidden Revolution in Portugal," *The New York Review of Books* XXII, no. 6 (17 April 1975): 29-35, "Portugal under Pressure," *The New York Review of Books* XXII, no. 9 (29 May 1975): 20-30, and "The Thorns of the Portuguese Revolution," *Foreign Affairs* 54, no. 2 (January 1976): 250-270; Tad Szulc, "Lisbon and Washington: Behind the Portuguese Revolution," *Foreign Policy* 21 (Winter 1975-76): 3-62; John A. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. I, *The Anatomy of an Explosion (1950-1969)*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1969, and *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II, *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare (1962-1976)*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978.

²³⁵ Szulc, "Lisbon and Washington," 7.

of Lisbon, attempted to march on the capital. A loyal cavalry unit, supported by light artillery, stopped and disarmed the rebellious troops just outside of Lisbon without a shot being fired.²³⁶ Some of the would-be coup makers managed to escape and returned to their barracks. Later, however, units of the regime's dedicated security force, the Republic Guards, surrounded the barracks and arrested the rebels. As a result, the revolt was short-lived, and a superficial and temporary calm returned to Lisbon and its environs.²³⁷ Still, the February and March sequence of events represented the first stages of a rapidly building revolutionary situation. From this moment in Portuguese history, there is a direct narrative line to the coup.²³⁸

²³⁶ Miguel Acoca, "Portugal Mutiny Put Down," *Washington Post*, March 17, 1974, sec. A, p. 1. Acoca was on assignment in Lisbon.

²³⁷ Miguel Acoca tells us that some members of the MFA's Coordinating Committee, an inner group of coup-makers that represented the center of power in the Armed Forces Movement, alleged that the March 16th uprising was merely "a dry run to determine the reactive capacity of the deposed government." Miguel Acoca, "Lisbon Officer Questions Long-term U.S. Intentions," *Washington Post*, May 24, 1974.

²³⁸ The House Select Committee on Intelligence, chaired by Representative Otis Pike (D-NY), which investigated the American intelligence community in the wake of allegations about inappropriate and illegal conduct and various intelligence failures, called attention to the significance of the February and March 1974 events. The committee's report noted in part, "The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research had not analyzed events in Portugal in the month before the April coup. In retrospect, four warning signals, beginning in late February and continuing through mid-March, 1974, should have sparked 'speculation at that time that a crisis of major proportions was brewing.'" Among the four warning signals were: the publication of Spínola's book; the refusal of Generals Costa Gomes and Spínola to take part in a regime-sponsored demonstration of unity for Caetano and his government and their subsequent ouster; the unsuccessful March coup attempt; the government's crackdown on suspected "leftist" within the government, including the armed forces, as well as within the general population. "The CIA Report the President Doesn't Want You to Read," *The Village Voice* 21, no. 7 (February 16, 1976): 79. The Ford Administration barred the report from public release. However, journalist Daniel Schorr managed to surreptitiously obtain a copy, and *The Village Voice* published it.

On April 25, the young officer's of the MFA executed their early morning coup efficiently and with a minimum of bloodshed. They immediately seized the country's major public broadcasting network, Radio Clube Portugues, and requested that the public remain calm and indoors. Prime Minister Caetano and several of his ministers fled to the loyalist Republic Guards' barracks, which rebelling units subsequently stormed. According to news reports, those inside quickly surrendered. General Spínola arrived at the barracks to personally accept the surrender of the prime minister who, along with four of his cabinet officials and President Tomás, left the country that evening for exile in Madeira.²³⁹

That same evening, rebelling units also attacked and captured the headquarters of the PIDE (Secret Police). Allegedly, shots had been fired from inside the building before the assault, killing six civilians and wounding another ten. This was the only reported incident of casualties occurring as a direct result of the coup. Following this incident, the MFA broadcast it had complete control over the country, and again requested that the public remain calm and stay indoors. This time, they also thanked the citizenry for its

²³⁹ "Dr. Caetano and Ministers Sent into Exile after Army Seizes Power," *The Times* (London), April 26, 1974, 1. Also, Jose Shercliff, "General Spínola Included in Seven-Man Junta, *The Times* (London), April 26, 1974, 1.

support, which included, “obeying all orders, cheering them, and giving them cigarettes, food, newspapers and even flowers.”²⁴⁰

For almost three weeks, the Junta of National Salvation (JSN) - the MFA’s leadership council, led by General Spínola and composed of more senior officers - essentially governed the country. On May 14, however, the JSN established the first provisional government, with General Spínola as its president and Adelino da Palma Carlos, an aging professor and liberal, as the prime minister. Spínola’s previous record as a stalwart pro-regime general made him an unlikely candidate not only to head the JSN, but also to be named as president of the first provisional government. According to Kenneth Maxwell, most of the MFA’s youthful leadership actually preferred General Costa Gomes, who was more aware of and in tune with the Movement’s intentions. However, “the publication of Spínola’s book in February, 1974, and the internal and international stir it caused made his choice inevitable.”²⁴¹ The coup leaders, then, apparently selected the prestigious Spínola to validate a coup engineered by a group of largely unknown junior

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Maxwell, “The Hidden Revolution in Portugal,” 30-31. One officer of the MFA, who was interviewed in June 1974 by *Manchester Guardian* journalist, Wilfred Burchett, gave these reasons for the selection of General Spínola to both the JSN and presidency of the first provisional government. Identifying himself only as a captain and commanding officer of an artillery unit who helped plan and carry out the coup, he said, “...we considered him honest, courageous, patriotic, a good officer, just and impartial, who maintained close personal relations with his officers and men. He was an officer of great prestige. The book which he wrote, demanding a political instead of military solution in Africa, was as a result of his contacts with officers of the Armed Forces Movement. One of his merits was that he dared oppose the official line.” Wilfred Burchett, “Is Portugal Marching Backward?” *Manchester Guardian*, June 26, 1974.

officers whose credibility and survivability depended, at least initially, upon members of the old guard.

The new government was largely civilian. The Socialists were appointed to several positions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an assignment given to the party's leader, Mario Soares. The Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), a strong supporter of the MFA, garnered two seats in the cabinet. Alvaro Cunhal, head of the PCP, was appointed minister-without-portfolio, and Avelino Pacheco Goncalves was designated as the labor minister, an especially important post given widespread labor unrest following the coup and Portugal's declining economic situation. According to Tad Szulc's assessment of the first provisional government, the anti-Communist Spínola preferred representation by all the political groupings that surfaced in the coup's aftermath.²⁴² In the case of the PCP, Spínola's thinking was that the Communists "were too important to be ignored; he preferred them in rather than out of the government. Soares and his Socialists interposed no objections."²⁴³

²⁴² The governments of both Antonio de Oliveira Salazar and his successor, Marcello Caetano, had virtually banned all political parties during the fascist era in Portuguese politics (1926-1974). Following the coup, a host of parties, or movements, covering the full political spectrum, emerged from the underground. The Socialist Party, headed by Mario Soares, and the Portuguese Communist Party, led by Alvaro Cunhal, were organized, disciplined, and well placed to assume major roles in the new government after nearly five decades of clandestine activities and exiled existence.

²⁴³ Szulc, "Lisbon and Washington," 23-24. The CIA's own assessment of the composition of the first provisional government supports Szulc's analysis of the reasons for inclusion of the PCP. In early May 1974, CIA's analysts noted that "Soares is in favor of including Communists in the provisional government on grounds that it will be better to have the Communists share cabinet responsibility than leave them on the

While ostensibly in control as the new head of state, General Spínola's powers were largely circumscribed by the MFA's Coordinating Committee, the very small, inner circle of the Movement's officer leadership that remained the real power broker in the Portuguese political scene. Moreover, Portugal's politics were deeply split between two opposing coalitions. Spínola was supported by the moderate elements in both the MFA and the political parties represented in the new government, including the Socialists and the centrist People's Democratic Party. In opposition stood the more radical officers of the MFA, who dominated the Coordinating Committee, the Communist Party, and a number of left-leaning political movements that had sprung up in the aftermath of the coup. It didn't take long for Spínola to realize that his thinking about Portugal's future, as well as that of the Lusitanian empire, conflicted with that of the powerful left bloc. As Portuguese historian, Fernando Andresen Guimaraes has observed, "It soon became clear that Spínola was not in complete control...Barely a month after his appointment, Spínola and the MFA were already on a collision course."²⁴⁴

The first provisional government's internal fissures led to political gridlock, and the country's political and economic situation, not well to begin with, further deteriorated.

outside to criticize. He emphasized that the Communists would be denied sensitive portfolios such as the foreign, defense, and interior ministry posts." Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Current Intelligence, "Portugal: Filling the Gap," *Weekly Review* (Washington, D.C., May 10, 1974), p. 5 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov>.

²⁴⁴ Fernando Andresen Guimaraes, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 87.

Moreover, the power struggle between General Spínola and the MFA deepened, increasing the deadlock and leading to the demise of the first provisional government in early July 1974. The change in government saw the civilian prime minister, Adelino da Palma Carlos, and four cabinet members resign, three of whom were civilians and members of the centrist Popular Democratic Party, part of the pro-Spínola political coalition. Significantly, the MFA's Coordinating Committee rejected General Spínola's handpicked successor to the premiership – the Minister of Defense and close ally, Lieutenant Colonel Mario Firmino Miguel. Instead, the Committee named the leftist, Colonel Vasco dos Santos Gonçalves, one of the few more senior members of the Coordinating Committee, as the new provisional prime minister.²⁴⁵

The military dominated the second provisional government. In addition to Colonel Gonçalves' appointment as prime minister, seven of the previously civilian-headed cabinet posts also went to military men, including the Ministry of Labor, which the Communist Party had held. The MFA's power was further enhanced with the creation of the Continental Operations Command on July 13, which effectively took control of the

²⁴⁵ General Spínola introduced Gonçalves as the new prime minister by referring to him as "the Brain of the April 25 coup." "Army Men Get Key Posts in Portugal's New Cabinet," *New York Times*, July 18, 1974, 1, and Henry Giniger, "Portuguese Colonel Named Premier; Military-Dominated Cabinet Expected," *New York Times*, July 14, 1974, 8.

Portuguese Armed Forces away from the government and placed them under the direct command of the MFA.²⁴⁶

A number of pressing issues, both domestic and colonial, contributed to the shakeup. According to a special report to the *New York Times*, the July political crisis and the formation of a military-dominated government represented a move by the MFA to take direct control over the country's domestic affairs. MFA leaders feared the revolution, for which they had risked their lives, was being subverted by the inability of the civilians in the first provisional government to reach consensus and thus provide united leadership and direction on a number of important issues. They also suspected, rightly so, that Spínola had his own personal political agenda for Portugal's future. The MFA leaders "were disturbed by the general unrest in the country, characterized by strikes, slowdowns, demonstrations, endless meetings and a defiance of authority that have affected the public services and private industry, and were said to have resented what looked like a power grab by President Spínola in the form of a proposal to stage a quick presidential election at a time when free political life was only just beginning."²⁴⁷

Henry Giniger, who closely covered the early months of the Portuguese revolution for the *New York Times*, confirmed this analysis but also added that significant colonial problems, especially racial clashes in both Mozambique and Angola, played a role in the

²⁴⁶ Guimaraes, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 87.

²⁴⁷ "Army Men Get Key Posts in Portugal's New Cabinet," 1.

dissolution of the first government. “An end to the political crisis was given urgency by the rapidly deteriorating situation in Portugal’s two major African territories, Mozambique and Angola, where splits between the black majorities and white minorities sharpened.”²⁴⁸

The MFA and Decolonization

The demonstrations of white resentment and backlash in the African colonies, as noted above, deeply concerned the MFA. The question of reactionary whites issuing a “unilateral declaration of independence,” in the mode of the Ian Smith regime in Rhodesia, was always a possibility.²⁴⁹ Such an event in any of the colonies would have

²⁴⁸ Henry Giniger, “Portuguese Colonel Named Premier; Military-Dominated Cabinet Expected, *New York Times*, July 14, 1974, 8. See also Henry Giniger, “Portugal’s New Premier Works to Form Cabinet to End Crisis,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1974, 3.

²⁴⁹ The MFA continually worried about internal and external interference with the decolonization process, which is the main reason why the independence talks with both the PAIGC and FRELIMO were conducted with great secrecy and expediency. The Movement’s concerns about dissident white settlers, supported by disgruntled former military and secret police (PIDE) officials, and perhaps receiving support from Portuguese reactionary groups in the metropole, were not unfounded. In October 1974, for example, Admiral Antonio Rosa Coutinho, the top MFA commander in Luanda, uncovered a plot by “an extremist organization of reactionary tendency” whose aim was to declare “a Rhodesia-type independence in Angola.” Luanda’s main daily, *A Provincia de Angola*, quoted the Admiral as having identified the plotters as civilians, military officials, and former agents of PIDE who had “strong financial backing from outside the country.” Admiral Coutinho also said these actions were meant, “to coincide with a seditious movement in Portugal,” which sought to destabilize the Lisbon government. Jose Shercliff, “Two Right-Wing Plots Uncovered in Angola,” *The Times* (London), October 29, 1974, 11. Historian Norrie MacQueen has also analyzed this Luandan crisis. While questioning whether or not the plot was part of a larger Portuguese-African conspiracy, as claimed by Admiral Coutinho, MacQueen wrote that the white extremist movement, the Revolutionary Angolan Front (FRA), whose leader was a former Portuguese military officer by the name of Pompilio da Cruz, “attempted to succeed where Mocambique Livre had failed.” (The Free Mozambique, or “Mocambique Livre,” Movement, composed mainly of disgruntled whites, had attempted to overthrow the established transitional government in Mozambique in the fall of 1974.) According to the author, the MFA members in Angola were better established and organized than

serious repercussions not only for the MFA's goal of rapid decolonization, but also for the course of the revolution in Portugal itself. If it were to materialize, the demoralized and listless Portuguese colonial army could easily be caught up in a racial war - trapped between angry and armed white settlers, perhaps quietly supported by the South African and Rhodesian regimes, and the majority black populations, also angry, armed, and spearheaded by nationalists groups that would never consent to white minority rule. The MFA worried that if the colonial army were ordered to restore order it would either refuse such orders, probably with large defections, or carry them out ineffectively. In the post-coup environment, the MFA correctly assessed the mood of the colonial army: no soldier wanted to be the last one to die for the Portuguese "civilizing mission."²⁵⁰

Moreover, The MFA believed that an order to the colonial army to intervene in the event of racial conflict, with its anticipated consequences, would seriously disrupt the

those in Mozambique and were able to rapidly and effectively move against the disorganized rebel forces. The rebellion was squashed, although further threats from other reactionary white groups continued to surface throughout the next several months. For all intents and purposes, however, after the defeat of the FRA and the arrest of its leadership, "The forces of white separatism now lost momentum." MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 170. Then *Pravda* journalist, Oleg Ignatyev, who spent time in Luanda in the fall of 1974, alleged that Cruz and his FRA, as well as several other white right-wing political movements, were closely connected to South Africa, implying that the movement was supported by that country and indicating not only a high South African interest in Angolan internal events, but also perhaps setting a precedent for its later, massive invasion of Angola. Oleg Ignatyev, "Angola on the Threshold of Change," *New Times* (Moscow), no. 46 (November 1974): 15. See also, Oleg Ignatyev, *Secret Weapon in Africa*, passim.

²⁵⁰ Journalist Henry Kamm reported in June that from the April 1974 coup onward, the Portuguese colonial army had become "an almost static army, engaging in no offensive actions of note and hoping for a cease-fire and a year of calm leading to an orderly referendum in each territory." Henry Kamm, "Portugal's Withdrawal From Africa Will Be Long and Tortuous," *New York Times*, June 19, 1974, 14.

solidarity of the MFA's leaders in Lisbon. Their own unity, as they saw it, was essential for the consolidation of power by Portugal's anti-fascist forces and, thus, for the revolutionary transformation of the nation.²⁵¹ The consequences of anarchy in the colonies would undoubtedly redound to the home country, where the unstable political and economic situation presented opportunities for the counter-coup aspirations of

²⁵¹ This fear of the MFA was not unfounded – in fact, it was very realistic – as the nexus of events in Portugal and Angola the following spring proved. Following an abortive coup in March 1975, planned and carried out by elements loyal to former president General Spínola, a previously muted but increasing factionalism within the MFA became visible. As the situation in Angola deteriorated in the spring and summer of 1975, this factionalism intensified. The MFA, as a group, was unable to remain impartial toward the disputing Angolan nationalist groups, with its more radical members highly favoring the MPLA and the moderates favoring UNITA. As reported by the *New York Times*, in May 1975, Portugal, “Faced with alarming disintegration” of the Alvor agreement on Angola, “reluctantly ordered its troops – in the process of disengaging from Angola – to move back in and restore order, a decision that opened a new split in the Armed Forces Movement. Some Portuguese soldiers mutinied in Lisbon when ordered to Angola to reinforce the peacekeeping troops, an indication of the dimensions of the job faced by the authorities and army commanders on the scene.” “Angola’s Last Chance?” *New York Times*, June 14, 1975, 26. As will be further discussed, the Portuguese and Angola’s three liberation movements agreed to the Alvor accords in mid-January 1975. The agreement committed the Portuguese government to neutrality toward the three contending movements and established a transitional government to oversee the path to independence, scheduled for November 11, 1975. Henry Kamm’s carefully crafted analysis of the unstable conditions in the Portuguese African colonies, and how the MFA in Lisbon viewed that instability in terms of its effects on the Movement’s objectives for Portugal, is illuminating. He explains the MFA’s concerns over the close relationship between the resolution of the colonial question and the MFA’s own longevity. His analysis underscores the linkage between the evolving situations in Portugal and her colonies, especially Angola and Mozambique. In addressing the potential for racial conflict, perhaps even warfare, in those two colonies, for example, Kamm noted, “The Portuguese Army is the only factor separating the two opposing forces...if it has to fight, either to defend itself against the guerrillas or to separate black and white militants, the army is worried that this would make the situation dangerous not only in Africa, but also, and perhaps more so, in Portugal. The question that preoccupies the military is whether bloodshed in Angola or Mozambique, putting the soldiers who staged the coup under grave pressure, might become the starting signal for a countercoup by the right. They are concerned also over the possibility that resumption of war would lead to serious disaffection among the Portuguese left, the strongest political force in the country, which has supported the leaders of the coup until now.” Kamm, “Portugal’s Withdrawal from Africa Will be Long and Tortuous,” 14.

reactionary segments of the society.²⁵² Thus, the young leaders of the MFA became convinced that rapid, full independence for the territories, under majority rule, was the best solution to the “colonial question.” Further, they saw it as absolutely vital to the continued unity, credibility, and viability of the Armed Forces Movement itself.

General Spínola’s ideas about decolonization, especially his specific plan for Angola, substantially differed from those of the MFA and led to his forced resignation in September 1974. I discuss this subject in detail in chapter 4. First, however, I will conclude this chapter by focusing on the United States’ reaction to the April coup, the increasing American-Portuguese tensions in its aftermath, and Washington’s initial response to the decolonization issue.

²⁵² From very early on in post-coup Portugal, the leaders of the MFA worried about CIA-sponsored subversive activity against them in Portugal and interference with the decolonization process. One of these concerns centered on the Portuguese Liberation Army (ELP) whose critical membership consisted of Portuguese rightists, including members of the Secret Police (PIDE), some of who fled Portugal for Spain following the coup. General Vernon Walters, Deputy Director of the CIA had not only visited Lisbon in August 1974, but he allegedly also visited Spain in the fall of 1974, as did William Colby, the Director of CIA. In Portugal, rumors abounded on the reasons for the Iberian visits by the top two American intelligence officials. They ranged from speculation about mere “snooping around,” including the alleged presence off the Portuguese coast of a mysterious CIA communications ship, named “Apollo,” to American support for the ELP. See, for example, Miguel Acoca, “Lisbon Officer Questions Long-Term U.S. Intentions,” and Nicholas Ashford, “Madrid Will Be Questioned About Activities of Secret Right-Wing Army plotting Chaos in Portugal,” *The Times* (London), March 25, 1975, 7. The latter article also reported that the ELP was linked to mercenary groups in Africa, composed of former Portuguese soldiers and ex-PIDE officials, whose dual objective was the overthrow of the Portuguese government and the defeat of the black nationalist movements in Africa. Following the unsuccessful March 1975 Spínolista coup, Ambassador Carlucci was charged by one of Lisbon’s main daily newspapers with conspiring with the CIA to use the ELP to topple the Portuguese government. The Ministry of Interior renounced the article as “irresponsible speculation,” and the American Embassy responded to the article with a letter refuting its allegations. Christopher Reed, “Envoy in Lisbon Fights Back,” *Manchester Guardian*, March 29, 1975.

Washington and the Portuguese Crisis

Despite the very visible indications in February and March 1974 that all was not well in Portugal, events that had all been reported in the American press, the April 25th coup caught American decision makers by surprise. In testimony before the House Select Committee on Intelligence (the Pike Committee) in October 1975, William G. Hyland, head of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, admitted, "Even a cursory review of the intelligence record indicates that there was no specific warning of the coup of April 25, 1974 in Portugal. As far as the Bureau of Intelligence and Research was concerned, our last analytical reporting was in late March and we drew no conclusions that pointed to more than a continuing struggle for power but short of a military revolt."²⁵³

²⁵³ "The CIA Report the President Doesn't Want You to Read," 79. Keith Clark, the CIA's National Intelligence Officer for Western Europe, and Lieutenant General Samuel V. Wilson, a deputy to the Director of Central Intelligence and the individual in charge of the U.S. attaché system, supported Hyland's assessment. Ibid. According to John M. Crewdson of the *New York Times*, Clark also noted that the last National Intelligence Estimate on Portugal was prepared in 1964, and along with General Wilson testified that the "system had not functioned well in the Portuguese crisis." John M. Crewdson, "'74' Lisbon Coup Took U.S. by Surprise," *New York Times*, October 8, 1975, 3. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons the "system" had failed in Portugal was because of the tendency for American foreign policy specialists to practice what Roger Morris, a member of Kissinger's National Security Council Staff during President Nixon's first term, has termed the "ever-present blight of 'clieny.'" According to Morris, clienly dictates that "The State Department (and CIA) officers presumably most knowledgeable about Metropolitan Portugal, those in the European Bureau in Washington or in Lisbon, were naturally loath to discover any weakening of Portuguese resolve or stability, their inclination being to resist the downgrading of their clients that might follow such confessions." Roger Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 112.

While Washington was caught off-guard by the Portuguese coup, this situation was hardly unique in the annals of so-called “intelligence failures.” During the course of its investigation, the Pike Committee revealed systemic problems in the intelligence community that prevented timely and accurate analysis of the 1968 Tet offensive in South Vietnam, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 following the overthrow of Archbishop Makarios by Greek military officers.

In the specific case of Portugal, CIA witnesses testified that over-reliance on information from the Portuguese secret police (the notorious PIDE, or International Police for the Defense of the State) meant that very little first-hand intelligence was generated by the small, and apparently mostly lethargic, CIA station in Lisbon. The paucity of primary intelligence sources also applied to the Defense Attaché system in Portugal.²⁵⁴ Since Portugal was a NATO member, American intelligence collectors

²⁵⁴ “The CIA Report the President Doesn’t Want You to Read,” 79. These CIA admissions are interesting, not only for what they reveal about American intelligence weaknesses, but also because the sources of information on Portugal’s relationships with its African colonies were largely restricted to Lisbon-controlled resources, such as the PIDE. In Angola, for example, the CIA did not have a case officer in Luanda, where the U.S. maintained a consulate, from 1969 until March 1975. The large CIA station in Kinshasa, Zaire, oversaw intelligence gathering on Angola until then (and, actually, even after March 1975), which in any case was also limited because the Kinshasa station relied on Holden Roberto, the leader of the FNLA, for information on the internal Angolan situation. Roberto, however, remained firmly ensconced in Kinshasa until July 1975, where he and his movement enjoyed the beneficence of Zaire’s President Mobutu. So, not only did the CIA have very poor intelligence on the domestic Portuguese situation, but also its knowledge of Portuguese-African relations was restricted, and slanted, by its lack of primary, on-the-ground assets in Angola and its reliance on Holden Roberto and his patron, Mobutu. The tendency towards “cliency,” obvious in incorrect intelligence assessments of the Portuguese situation, also impaired American knowledge and understanding of Angolan internal dynamics that would later affect American decision-making on Angola. The exception to the weakness in intelligence on Angola was the

apparently deemed it too chancy, or perhaps too sensitive, to “spy” on an ally. Journalist John A. Crewdson reported, for example, that the CIA’s Keith Clark admitted, “‘Hard information’ on the domestic and military situation, ‘would have been difficult to come by without vastly more expense and risk than anyone would have cared to undertake.’” Mr. Clark also testified that the primary American intelligence interest in Portugal before the coup lay in Portugal’s relationships with its African colonies and not with the Metropole.”²⁵⁵

Not only did Prime Minister Caetano’s ouster come as a surprise to American decision makers, but it also caused considerable consternation since very little was known about the political leanings, motivations and agenda of the MFA leadership which numbered about two hundred at the time of the coup. Even General Spínola, despite his popularity in Portugal and the uproar caused by the publication of his book, was a largely unknown entity to American decision makers in Washington. However, the American ambassador in Lisbon at that time, Stuart Nash Scott, knew of the general and accurately described him as pro-Western and moderate.²⁵⁶

reporting by Tom Killoran, the American Consul General in Luanda from mid-1974 until November 1975. However, Washington largely ignored his reports, which spoke most favorably of the MPLA.

²⁵⁵ Crewdson, “‘74’ Lisbon Coup Took U.S. by Surprise,” 3.

²⁵⁶ Szulc, “Lisbon and Washington,” 19. The Pike Committee Report is instructive, again, on Washington’s lack of first-hand information on the coup’s leadership and on the impact of Spínola’s book. The Committee noted, “When a group of left-leaning Portuguese junior military officers ousted the Caetano regime on April 25, 1974, State Department officials represented to the *New York Times* that Washington knew those who were behind the coup well. State indicated that we were not surprised by the coup, and

The inclusion of Communists in the first government (and the subsequent provisional governments), as well as what he perceived as the Socialist Party's indulgence of the PCP, led Kissinger to a pessimistic assessment of the Portuguese situation.²⁵⁷ His

that no significant changes in Portugal's NATO membership were expected. Nothing could have been further from the truth." "The CIA Report the President Doesn't Want You to Read," 79. Correspondent John Crewdson, writing on the leaked testimonies of several of Washington's key Western European bureaucrats, including William Hyland, Keith Clark, and Lieutenant General Samuel V. Wilson, noted that "all conceded under questioning that they had not read the Spínola book at the time of its publication or since, and had received only summaries or briefings on its contents before the coup." Crewdson, "'74' Lisbon Coup Took U.S. by Surprise," 3. As the situation in Portugal became more chaotic and mercurial, Kissinger's original concern over the direction of the revolutionary situation grew into something approaching paranoia. In late October 1974, he fired Ambassador Scott, for reasons known only to the Secretary of State, and replaced him with Frank C. Carlucci. The *Washington Post* speculated that Scott was fired because Kissinger "doubted the accuracy of his reports minimizing the likelihood of a Communist takeover in Portugal." "U.S. Seen Firing Lisbon Envoy," *Washington Post*, November 6, 1974. Tad Szulc supports the *Post's* hypothesis. He observed that neither Ambassador Scott nor Western European analysts in the State Department shared Kissinger's doom and gloom assessment of the Portuguese situation, and that "Carlucci was apparently picked for his reputation for toughness and the expectation that he would follow the secretary's 'hard line.'" Szulc, "Lisbon and Washington," 29, 31.

²⁵⁷ Kissinger, who later became a supporter of Mario Soares and his Socialists, compared the party's accommodation of the Communists in the provisional governments to that of the Kerensky-led provisional government after the overthrow of Nicholas II in March 1917. The end-result of that, of course, was the subsequent Bolshevik seizure of power in November 1917. Referring to the July 1974 to August 1975 premiership of Colonel Vasco dos Santos Gonçalves (a leftist, to be sure, but not a member of the PCP), Kissinger wrote that when Gonçalves met President Ford at the May 1975 NATO summit, "he told Ford that the democratic non-Communist parties were not really democratic because, by definition, each of them represented the viewpoint of only a segment of the electorate. Gonçalves claimed that he represented a more inclusive view of politics above party – a concept straight out of Lenin...It was this Leninist tendency that had led me to make the not-so-tactful comment to Mario Soares, the head of the Socialist Party, that the democratic leaders risked ending up like Aleksandr Kerensky – the last democratic Russian leader before Lenin's coup." Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 630. Tad Szulc's recounting of the Kissinger-Soares exchange, which occurred in October 1974 in Washington, D.C., reveals that Kissinger was not only "not-so-tactful," but also that he was abrasively disdainful. Szulc reported that Kissinger used the occasion of a luncheon "to deliver a lecture on Communism to his Portuguese guests. 'I want to be frank with you,' he said. 'I could talk about the weather and so on, but I must be frank...You are allowing excessive Communist Party influence in the government.' Turning to Soares, the Socialist, Kissinger said, 'You are a Kerensky...I believe your sincerity, but you are naïve.' Soares shot back, according to one observer, 'I certainly don't want to be a Kerensky.' Kissinger said, 'Neither did Kerensky.'" Szulc, "Lisbon and Washington," 3.

worries were apparently not alleviated by the reports he was receiving from Ambassador Scott in Lisbon, which urged a “wait and see attitude” on the part of the American government.

The collapse of the first provisional government in early July 1974, brought about by the resignation of Prime Minister Palma Carlos and three members of the centrist Popular Democratic Party, as well as the MFA’s rejection of Lieutenant Colonel Mario Firmino Miguel, the Minister of Defense and a close associate of Spínola, as Palma Carlos’s successor raised yet another red flag in Washington. Moreover, the MFA’s appointment of Colonel Vasco dos Santos Gonçalves as prime minister, a major figure in the Armed Forces Movement, could not have pleased Secretary Kissinger. He believed that if Gonçalves weren’t actually a member of the PCP, he was at least a fellow traveler.²⁵⁸

Washington’s Back-Channel Intelligence

During the early months of the Portuguese revolution, Kissinger was highly skeptical about the reports he was receiving from Ambassador Scott and apparently received

²⁵⁸ Kissinger described Gonçalves, as well as other MFA leaders, thusly. “The state of mind of many of the new leaders was exemplified by Colonel Vasco dos Santos Gonçalves, who served as Prime Minister from mid-1974 to August 1975, and who, if not an outright Communist, only refrained from membership in order to save paying his party dues.” Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 630. Journalist Henry Giniger, writing for the *New York Times*, noted that the new prime minister, interestingly, conferred with Alvaro Cunhal of the PCP before meeting with President Spínola. Following the meeting, Cunhal assured his followers that PCP participation in the new provisional government would continue, including his own role as Minister without Portfolio. Giniger’s reporting on Gonçalves’ credentials noted that Gonçalves was a member of both the MFA’s Coordinating Committee and its Council of State, “the highest body on constitutional matters,” and that Gonçalves “has been influential in its political thinking.” Henry Giniger, “Portugal’s New Premier Works to Form Cabinet to End Crisis.” *New York Times*, July 15, 1974, 3.

conflicting and more pessimistic information from a variety of sources.²⁵⁹ One of the more important intelligence sources, part of Kissinger's "back channel" communications, was retired Admiral George W. Anderson, the Chief of Naval Operations during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and former ambassador to Lisbon during the late Salazar years.

Kenneth Maxwell has alleged that Admiral Anderson, who lived in the south of Portugal

²⁵⁹ Kissinger's pessimistic nature occasionally led him to dire predictions about the direction of Portuguese politics. In the late summer of 1974, for example, he was convinced Portugal would be taken over by the Communists, even while Ambassador Scott, from Lisbon, was advising him that a Communist takeover was not inevitable at that time, especially if the United States provided economic aid to Portugal to strengthen the Socialist's hand in the emerging political struggle with the Communists. Szulc, "Lisbon and Washington," 26-27. General Francisco Costa Gomes, who became Portugal's president after Spínola's resignation in late September 1974, attempted on several occasions, including his visit to Washington, D.C. in October 1974, to allay Kissinger's concerns. His efforts, however, seemed to fall on deaf ears. In early November 1974, Ambassador Scott delivered a message to President Costa Gomes from Kissinger stating that Portugal was being removed from NATO's Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) and would henceforth be denied access to NATO Atomic and Cosmic information. Scott then transmitted Costa Gomes' response to Kissinger on 2 November. Costa Gomes, who had served as a Portuguese representative to NATO's Supreme Allied Command, Atlantic (SACLANT), in Norfolk, VA, during the 1960s, first acknowledged the Secretary of State's concern about the security of NATO classified information in Portugal. He admitted that he could not state definitely that there was no possibility of a leak of such material (a truthful confession which probably applied to all NATO nations, including the United States). In an apparent attempt to alleviate the Secretary's anxiety, however, he added that Alvaro Cunhal, whose antipathy for NATO membership was well known, had admitted that Portugal basically had no other option than to remain a NATO member. As Ambassador Scott then reported, "Costa Gomes repeated several times his feeling that Secretary Kissinger's preoccupations about the political situation in Portugal were grossly exaggerated. As for the presence of a Communist in the GOP, Alvaro Cunhal was a Minister without Portfolio and therefore without direct access to any GOP secret files." Lisbon Telegram 04725, "Subject: Portugal and the NPG," November 2, 1974, p. 2, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Portugal – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (1), Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library. Senator Mansfield's report to President Ford on his official trip to Portugal in August 1975, from which the beginning quote in this chapter is taken, was also an attempt to quell what he believed was a continuing and misplaced alarmist approach to the situation in Portugal and to caution against rash judgments based on ideological predilections. As he told Ford, "There are many facets to the situation and if we seek to reduce them only to two - Communist and anti-Communist - we are going to see not with clarity but with detriment to our own interests." Senator Mike Mansfield Letter to President Ford, "Subject: Observations on the Portuguese Situation – Estimate of the Military-Political Situation," August 22, 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Portugal (5), Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.

following his retirement, was Kissinger's "key private adviser on Portugal during the early months" (of the revolution.). According to Maxwell, the Admiral has an informal relationship with members of an ultra-right group loyal to the deposed Portuguese president, Admiral Americo Tomas – a group that had also urged the firing of the moderate General Spínola, then Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, after the publication of his book, *Portugal and the Future*, in February 1974.²⁶⁰

General Walters, then Deputy Director of the CIA, also served as an important back-channel source of information. Kissinger sent him to Portugal on a fact-finding mission in August 1974, shortly after the formation of the Gonçalves' second provisional government. His visit provided an additional pessimistic account of the Portuguese situation.²⁶¹ According to Tad Szulc, "Walters and the CIA judged that Portugal was as

²⁶⁰ Maxwell notes that this group, which he refers to as "integrationists," was opposed not only to the MFA and General Spínola's ideas about decolonization, which were, in reality, very different, but also to "the very idea of decolonization itself." Kenneth Maxwell, "Portugal under Pressure," *The New York Review of Books* XXII, no. 9 (May 29, 1975): 23.

²⁶¹ Kenneth Maxwell alleges that General Walters met with some of the ultra-right "integrationists," a group which included several close friends of Admiral Anderson. The integrationists were former Salazar and Caetano civilian and military governmental officials who assumed top positions in Portuguese industry following their service. They feared the radical revolutionary threat to Portugal's future and to their own political and economic situations. Ibid. General Walters, in a letter to the editor of *The New York Review of Books*, denied having seen any members of the group, while admitting that he had visited Portugal in August 1974. Vernon A. Walters, "Letter to the Editor," *The New York Review of Books* XXII, no. 13 (August 7, 1975). Interestingly, this was the first confirmation that General Walters had even visited Portugal at all in 1974. See Kenneth Maxwell, "Kenneth Maxwell Replies," *The New York Review of Books* XXII, no. 13 (August 7, 1975). Miguel Acoca, a journalist for the *Washington Post*, also reported on Walters' August visit to Portugal (and Spain). Alluding to Kissinger's apparent skepticism of U.S. embassy Lisbon reports, Acoca reported, "Informed sources said that Kissinger dispatched Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters... to Lisbon in August for a 'personal appraisal.' The CIA would not comment on the persistent

good as lost to the Communists, in part because of the rising radicalization of the MFA.”²⁶²

It was these gloomy assessments from trusted confidantes that, at least early on, appeared to have had the most influence on Kissinger’s stance toward Portugal. They contrasted with the more even-handed reports emanating from Ambassador Scott who, until Kissinger fired him in October 1974, urged at least moderate American economic support to Portugal to enhance the status of the Socialist Party and its leader, Mario Soares, who had been requesting such support.²⁶³

reports of Walters’ visit, refusing even to confirm that it took place. A CIA spokesman said that the agency never comments on the travels of its top personnel.” Miguel Acoca, “U.S. Said to Fear Lisbon Shift to Left,” *Washington Post*, October 27, 1974.

²⁶² Szulc, “Lisbon and Washington,” 34. Szulc also supports Maxwell’s contention that Admiral Anderson provided Kissinger with intelligence reports on the Portuguese situation, and that these reports were of a pessimistic nature, perhaps as a result of his apparent friendship with at least some of the now threatened ultra-right integrationists.

²⁶³ In early November 1974, just as Ambassador Scott was preparing to depart his Lisbon post, and before Ambassador Carlucci’s arrival in Portugal, Kissinger dispatched a four-person State Department fact-finding team to Portugal to assess the situation – a promise he had made to President Costa Gomes and Foreign Minister Mario Soares during their visit to Washington in October 1974. According to Tad Szulc, the group, headed by Alan Lukens, director of the State Department’s Iberian division, “Concluded that the United States ‘can trust Soares’ and that he should be bolstered by some measure of economic aid rather than be isolated with his Socialists from the world’s democratic community.” *Ibid.*, 32. In early December 1974, Kissinger, while still largely pessimistic about Portugal’s future, but apparently persuaded by senior State Department officials who supported the Lukens’ recommendations, approved the department’s recommended, modest economic package for Portugal. He may have also felt pressure from Congress to do something positive. In early December 1974, the Senate had passed an amendment to the foreign aid bill providing \$50 million in various types of credits and grant aid assistance for Portugal. The Ford Administration supported this amendment, and an aid package of approximately \$70 million dollars was offered to the Portuguese government. The specifics for the aid package are detailed in Memorandum for the President, “Subject: Assistance to Portugal,” December 23, 1974, pp. 1-2 and Tab A, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Portugal (3), Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.

Kissinger's informal intelligence network probably provided him with much of the information contained in a background paper he prepared for President Ford before the visit of President Costa Gomes to Washington in October 1974. He cautioned the president, "Our attitude toward Costa Gomes cannot be entirely negative...because in the current Portuguese political context he does represent a voice of moderation."²⁶⁴

However, the Secretary of State also wrote that "clandestine sources" were reporting that with each crisis in Portugal, the position of the younger members of the MFA, "described to us as 'self-taught Marxists,'" seems to have been strengthened and that this "core group of MFA officers favors withdrawal from NATO and a foreign policy of non-alignment."²⁶⁵ Based upon this assessment from unidentified, sub-rosa sources, Kissinger recommended that President Ford not promise economic aid to the Portuguese government, a major reason for Costa Gomes' Washington trip, "unless Portuguese policy over the period immediately ahead clearly demonstrates that democracy in Portugal and a pro-Western orientation are not in jeopardy."²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Memorandum for President Ford from Henry A. Kissinger, "Meeting with Francisco da Costa Gomes, President of Portugal," (Washington, D.C., 18 October 1974), p.3 {Database on-line}; available from Declassified Documents Reference System.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 1.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 4. Kissinger's reference to Portuguese democracy is interesting in light of the fact that during the Salazar-Caetano years of fascist dictatorship, democracy was not a major issue in the American-Portuguese relationship - only the continued Western-NATO orientation of the country and American access to the Azores military facilities. Now, with the left-leaning bias of some members of the MFA and the strength of the Portuguese Communist Party, Kissinger suddenly became concerned about Portuguese democracy.

Portugal and NATO

Kissinger's usually gloomy assessment of the Portuguese situation during the early months of the revolution stemmed, at least in part, from his concerns over the challenge of Eurocommunism to American influence in Western Europe and to the NATO alliance itself, as discussed in Chapter 2. President Ford was similarly worried.²⁶⁷ The specter of Eurocommunism's appeal throughout most of Western Europe, then, informed the manner in which Washington viewed the establishment of Portugal's first and second provisional government with the PCP occupying various cabinet positions.

Ford and Kissinger's worries about the possible adverse effects on NATO's future from Eurocommunist party participation in national politics may have been somewhat

²⁶⁷ The presence of Communists in Portugal's government was a major presidential discussion point during Ford's visit to Helsinki in July 1975 for the signing of the Helsinki agreements. According to Kissinger, President Ford used the pretext of Communist participation in Portuguese politics to strongly warn the Italian Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, about the Communist dangers in his own country. There, the Communist Party enjoyed widespread popularity and increasing representational strength in both regional and national politics, and even some staunch anti-Communists leaders were advocating an "opening to the left." Ford told the prime minister, "We do not see how it is possible to tolerate a Marxist government in NATO...With the liberal, leftist leanings of these people, you are sure to end up with a Communist government, and such a situation would be completely unacceptable to us if they were in NATO. Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 629. The Pike Committee's investigation of American clandestine support for Western European parties, organizations, and individuals opposed to the Eurocommunist Parties is very illuminating on the subject of the American government's historic fears of, and intense distaste for, Communist participation in the political life of Western Europe. The Committee reported, for example, that from 1948 to 1968, the United States' support to non-Communist parties and individuals, usually funneled through the CIA, amounted to \$65,150,000 – no small sum. "The CIA Report the President Doesn't Want You to Read," 86. In the leaked report, the names of the recipients of this American politically targeted largesse were deleted. However, a careful reading of the report, especially the footnotes, suggests they were anti-Communist entities in Italy. American political support was again evident in Italy's 1972 parliamentary elections when the American ambassador in Rome channeled an additional \$10,000,000 to non-Communist candidates, parties and affiliated organizations. *Ibid.*, 84.

exaggerated, probably for effect. However, as Kissinger frequently observed, none of these parties supported the Atlantic Alliance. Moreover, in Portugal, the Communist Party under Alvaro Cunhal was decidedly pro-Moscow, and had supported the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Cunhal stoked the flames of the Ford Administration's anti-Eurocommunism stance soon after his return from fourteen years of exile in Eastern Europe. When asked about the nation's NATO membership, Cunhal stated that he favored Portugal's non-participation in military blocs. As reported by Miguel Acoca in a special report to the *Washington Post*, Cunhal added in his response to the same question, "Our hope is that the international thaw and that the progress of peaceful coexistence will put an end' to such alliances.""²⁶⁸

Washington's worries may have been purposely inflated, but they were grounded in solid strategic concerns - specifically, the Iberian Peninsula's important role in the Atlantic Alliance. Portugal, along with Spain, not a NATO member at the time, but which allowed American leases of naval and air facilities in the country, anchored the alliance's southwestern flank and protected the strategic Gibraltar Strait. Moreover, Portugal's control of the Azores, whose value had been amply demonstrated during the American re-supply of Israel during the 1973 Middle East War, was a special concern. The American lease of Azorean military bases had expired in February 1974, and the

²⁶⁸ Miguel Acoca, "Portuguese Popular Front: Communists Tell Electoral Strategy," *Washington Post*, May 12, 1974, 13.

continued use of the facilities was on an ad hoc, day-by-day basis. Additionally, American leases of non-NATO Spain's military facilities were set to expire in 1975, and General Francisco Franco, the long-lived Fascist leader of the country, was in failing health (he died in November 1975).

There is evidence to suggest that Kissinger's pessimism over the future status of the Iberian nations as it related to NATO and American leadership of the Atlantic Alliance were connected to, yet again, the well-worn Domino Theory. As previously noted in the discussion of Allende's Chile, Secretary of State Kissinger sometimes appeared to be obsessively troubled with the issue. At the time of the November 1974 firing of Ambassador Scott in Lisbon, for example, the *Washington Post*, citing informed sources, remarked, "Kissinger is said to be concerned about a possible 'Southern Europe domino theory' involving besides Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, and to fear that the emergence of the Portuguese Communist Party will be duplicated in neighboring Spain, Western Europe's last remaining rightist pro-American regime, when Generalissimo Francisco Franco, aging and in ill health, dies."²⁶⁹ Journalist Miguel Acoca, in a special report to the *Washington Post*, also reported that informed sources told him "that Kissinger and others in Washington were obsessed with the fear that Portugal will be the first country to go Communist in what was called 'a southern Europe domino theory' also

²⁶⁹ "U.S. Seen Firing Lisbon Envoy," *Washington Post*, November 6, 1974.

involving Spain, Italy and Greece. This fear apparently has been fed by pessimistic intelligence assessments, press reports stressing the power of the left in Portugal, and the anxieties of multinational companies with interests in Portugal and its African colonies.”²⁷⁰

Ingmar Oldberg, a historian at the University of Lund and the Swedish National Defence Research Institute in Stockholm, supports the *Post's* conjecture that Kissinger was concerned about a fractionalization of the Atlantic Alliance. “Kissinger made Portugal a new testing-ground for the ‘domino theory,’ according to which the loss of one country might lead to the loss of others. As early as October 1974 he was reported as fearing that the Communists would gain full control in Portugal and precipitate similar take-overs in Spain, Italy and Greece.”²⁷¹ Kenneth Maxwell supports this assessment. “As soon as it became known that communists would participate in the government in Lisbon Kissinger’s action were panicky, reflexive, automatic. Almost immediately NATO ‘secrets’ were no longer passed to the Portuguese. Stories were leaked about a ‘Mediterranean domino theory’...The ‘domino’ argument was almost entirely

²⁷⁰ Miguel Acoca, “U.S. Said to Fear Lisbon Shift to Left,” *Washington Post*, October 27, 1974.

²⁷¹ Ingmar Oldberg, “The Portuguese Revolution of 1974-1975 and U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Cooperation and Conflict* XVII (1982): 184. Oldberg bases this assessment of Kissinger’s fear of falling dominoes on information derived from *Facts on File*, 1974, p. 930.

ideological, concerned with the potential participation of communists in the governments of Spain, Italy, France, and Greece.”²⁷²

Whether Kissinger sincerely believed in a European domino theory is not important. What is significant is the use of “falling dominoes” symbolism in an attempt to strengthen his arguments against Eurocommunism. Both he and President Ford used the Portuguese situation to punctuate their lecturing to Western European leaders with admonishments about the dangers of Communist participation in European politics, not the least of which might be the collapse of NATO, the withdrawal of American forces, and the ebbing of the American commitment to the defense of Western Europe. As noted by Oldberg, “This domino theory should not be seen so much as a conviction and a prophecy but more as a conscious device to scare people into taking actions against the danger in Portugal and other countries.”²⁷³

Portuguese Decolonization and Option Two

Clearly, Kissinger was concerned and just as often perplexed and frustrated by the leftward tilt of Portuguese politics. However, besides Portugal during 1974, Kissinger had a full plate of other worries, not the least of which were the unfolding events of the Watergate scandal and President Nixon’s increasingly weakened political position with

²⁷² Kenneth Maxwell, “Portugal Under Pressure,” *New York Review of Books* XXII, no. 9 (May 29, 1975): 21-22.

²⁷³ Oldberg, “The Portuguese Revolution of 1974-1975,” 184.

the public, the congress, and his own Republican Party. Then, too, the Middle East continued to simmer following the October 1973 War, even though President Nixon had undertaken a June 1974 visit to the region in an attempt to use his international stature and leadership (now weakened, no doubt, by the ongoing Watergate investigations) to reach a solution acceptable to all parties.

These concerns, among others, may explain why he, certainly not alone, failed to grasp the radically changed environment in sub-Saharan Africa as a result of the Portuguese coup and the MFA's decision to decolonize. Most particularly, Kissinger should have been troubled about the shattered assumptions of National Security Study Memorandum 39 (NSSM 39), especially the principle assumption that "the whites are here to stay." At least some of the whites – the Portuguese – were about to terminate their "civilizing mission" and retreat to Europe."²⁷⁴

However, the Secretary of State apparently saw no disconnect between American policy in southern Africa in the post-coup situation and the pre-coup assumptions of Option Two. African bureau chief, Donald Easum, clearly recognized that events in the region demanded new thinking and he earned Kissinger's contempt, and eventual dismissal, for that insight. But the rest of the State Department's AF, perhaps intimated

²⁷⁴ As Graham Hovey of the *New York Times* observed, "Mr. Kissinger's Option Two premise was exploded in the overthrow of Portugal's fascist regime in April of 1974 by an army weary of unwinnable colonial wars and determined to negotiate promptly with the liberation movements for the independence of the African territories." Graham Hovey, "Bankruptcy on Africa." *New York Times*, March 2, 1976, 29.

by Kissinger's propensity to bully and browbeat his subordinates, did virtually nothing to at least try to enlighten their leader.²⁷⁵

For example, a series of four briefing papers prepared by the State Department for President Ford between September 1974 and May 1975 continued to construe American foreign policy in the region exactly along the lines of Option Two.²⁷⁶ The September 4th issue paper, most of which was faithfully replicated in the three following papers, exhibited no change in the department's thinking toward southern Africa. Each paper

²⁷⁵ Historian Daniel Spikes addresses Easum's unenviable position with Kissinger. He realized "that events taking shape in southern Africa screamed for dynamism and innovation. But whenever Easum pressed African issues in Washington policy forums, 'where occasional General Idi Amin jokes were much in style,' it only earned him his boss's legendary scorn. What should have been an occasion for the obscure State Department Africa Bureau to play an important role on the international stage became instead, because of Kissinger's indifference toward Africa, a time of frustration and disappointment." Daniel Spikes, *Angola and the Politics of Intervention: From Local Bush War to Chronic Crisis in Southern Africa* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1993), 117.

²⁷⁶ The four are: *Memorandum for Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, The White House*, "Subject: Issues Paper on Southern Africa," September 4, 1974, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Africa – General (1), Box 1, Gerald R. Ford Library; *Memorandum for Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, The White House*, "Subject: Issues Paper on Southern Africa," October 15, 1974, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Africa – General (1), Box 1, Gerald R. Ford Library; *Memorandum for Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, The White House*, "Subject: Issues Paper on Southern Africa," December 13, 1974, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Africa – General (2), Box 1, Gerald R. Ford Library; *Memorandum for Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, The White House*, "Subject: Issues Paper on Southern Africa," May 15, 1975, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1975, Africa – General (2), Box 1, Gerald R. Ford Library. Each contained a brief cover sheet from the Department of State's Executive Secretary explaining that they were for the Secretary of State's morning discussion with President Ford. All four papers, using identical language, did recognize that the Portuguese coup, as they put it, "opened the door to far-reaching changes affecting the entire southern African region," emphasizing that independence for Angola and Mozambique "will create the first potential breach in the cordon of friendly buffers between South Africa and black Africa." *Memorandum for Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, The White House*, "Subject: Issues Paper on Southern Africa," October 15, 1974, p.1. Still, the appropriateness of the American policy in the region, as promulgated by Option Two, went unquestioned.

asked the question, “Do recent developments suggest the need for major modifications or adjustments of our policies vis a vis southern Africa?” While admitting that the changing regional situation gave rise to “further questions,” most dealing with American policy toward South Africa and Rhodesia, the response to this question in all four papers was, “In a recent re-examination of our policies, we concluded that the delicate balancing act we have performed has served us well in protecting our conflicting interests in black and white Africa.”²⁷⁷ Further, each paper noted, “Satisfying our competing economic, political and strategic interests without acquiescing in the racist policies of the region has necessarily entailed an uneasy and imperfect balancing act...However, our differentiated strategy has enabled us to maintain reasonably good relations with black and white Africa.”²⁷⁸

As for the Portuguese African colonies, the papers discussed decolonization developments as the independence talks for Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique progressed. However, all observed “...we have consistently supported the right of their people to self-determination. For over a decade of fighting between Portugal and African nationalist groups, our embargo on arms to either side for use in that conflict reflected our hope for a non-violent solution. We opposed resolutions in the UN which we considered

²⁷⁷ *Memorandum for Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, The White House*, “Subject: Issues Paper on Southern Africa,” September 4, 1974, pp. 4-5.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

extreme and not conducive to peaceful resolution.”²⁷⁹ The suggestion of some sort of even-handed policy towards Portugal and its African colonies was broadly false, not only from an historical perspective, as I discussed in Chapter 1, but also as a description of the Option Two Policy as practiced.

In summary, a number of factors came together during 1974 that had a major bearing on the way the White House, especially Mr. Kissinger, perceived the unfolding events in the Portuguese territories in Africa. These included, among other things: the Secretary of State’s personal disregard for and ignorance of the black nationalist liberation struggles in Portuguese Africa;²⁸⁰ his lack of respect for the advice of his supposed principal advisors on African issues; the absence of sound intelligence and the biased back-channel information on Portugal’s unsettled political environment and its effects upon the decolonization process; the almost total absence of first-hand, unbiased information on the various liberation groups because of a policy which encouraged

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 2. The December 13th issue paper, for example, noted that Washington had “congratulated the new transitional government of Mozambique following its installation last September 20.” Interestingly, the same paper, noting that contacts with the liberation movements had recently been upgraded to the “Chief of Mission” level, reported that Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Donald Easum had met with liberation movement leaders during his recent visit to southern Africa. Ibid., p. 3. It was after this visit, and Easum’s groundbreaking talks with FRELIMO’s Samora Machel in Mozambique, that Kissinger “relieved” Easum of his duties.

²⁸⁰ As late as April 1975, after the Forty Committee had already allocated \$300,000 to the FNLA upon the advice of the CIA, Kissinger told President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia during the latter’s visit to Washington that the United States knew “relatively little about such areas as Angola, where there are three different liberation movements, and this made it difficult to estimate which potential leader would be best for a stable rule.” State Department Telegram, “Subject: Kaunda’s Meeting with Secretary, April 19, 1975,” p. 2, National Security Adviser: Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zambia – State Department Telegrams from SecState –EXDIS, Box 8, Gerald R. Ford Library.

dialogue with the white regimes only; Kissinger's ostensible, but fallacious, belief that the "communications" policy was actually having a positive influence in southern Africa and that it needed no modification.²⁸¹ All of these left the United States, in the persona of Henry Kissinger who sat at the top of the National Security Council, the State Department, and the CIA through the Forty Committee, ill-prepared to understand the complexities of the decolonization efforts in the Portuguese territories, especially in Angola where three mutually hostile liberation movements actively sought outside support.

Conclusion

1974 was a singularly important year during the Nixon presidency. It represented the beginning of the end of the Nixon-Kissinger effort to restore American leadership and credibility through the construction of a new foreign policy paradigm centered on triangular diplomacy with the Soviet Union and China. As discussed in Chapter 2, the momentum for the policy significantly slowed during the year, partly as a result of the changing domestic political environment, and as a consequence of the disastrous American involvement in Vietnam. Although the new president shared Kissinger's geo-

²⁸¹ According to special correspondents of the journal, *Africa*, Kissinger reportedly told African delegates at the UN in the fall of 1974 "that independence came to Guinea Bissau 'non-violently' – as the U.S. has always said it should," apparently ignoring the very successful, but violent, insurgency waged by the PAIGC since 1963. "Kissinger's Secret Paper," *Africa*, no. 40 (December 1974): 24. The same article reported that the United States also viewed "the recent talk of détente in southern Africa between South Africa and Zambia," as an Option Two success story. Ibid.

strategic perspective and desired to press on with his predecessor's global policy, the Executive's dominion over foreign policy had been substantially weakened.

Besides these momentous international and domestic events, however, the Nixon-Kissinger five-year endeavor to shape a world more amenable to American interests was unexpectedly interrupted by a leftist coup and revolutionary situation in a heretofore right-wing, pro-American NATO country. In large part, debilitating counter-insurgency wars in far-off African territories (not unlike the United States' own Vietnam quagmire) precipitated Portugal's own year of crisis.

The inclusion of Communists in a succession of provisional governments, coming as it did in the wake of France's break with NATO and Paris's independent policies, West Germany's Ostpolitik, and the growing strength of the Italian Communist Party, elevated Washington's concerns about the effects of Eurocommunism on the Western Alliance. From a strategic standpoint, these concerns over the direction of Portugal's unstable political course were not unfounded. The country, along with Spain, protected the western access to the Mediterranean via the Strait of Gibraltar, and Lisbon controlled American (and NATO) access to military facilities in the Azores. Moreover, the American lease on the airbase at Lajes, which had proved critical to the resupply of Israel the previous fall, expired in February 1974 without a new agreement in place.

Kissinger, then, had a full plate of both global and domestic worries as the presidency of Richard Nixon neared its end. In this scenario, the future of Portugal's African colonies, including Angola – the jewel in the crown – was insignificant. It is little wonder, then, that Option Two, the policy of indifference, continued to inform the White House's posture toward sub-Saharan Africa, despite its rapidly changing situation. These more important and understandable concerns, however, cannot excuse the Secretary of State's disregard for the advice of his well-informed principal adviser on Africa during 1974, Donald Easum, who urged a substantial change of course in the region as Portugal began its decolonization process. But, as discussed in Chapter 2, Kissinger never engaged Easum in any meaningful dialogue about Africa south of the Sahara.

At any rate, as the Angolan storm began to build in late 1974, escalating into armed conflict in early 1975, advice from a demeaned and demoralized Bureau of African Affairs, now under the leadership of the much maligned Nathaniel Davis, became more and more irrelevant to Kissinger's geostrategic perspective. Within that framework, Angola and what happened there carried little weight of its own. Its place in history was only important as it affected the international balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union, as viewed from the White House. Thus, when Nathaniel Davis recommended to Kissinger that the United States actively encourage a political solution for Angola, and in no case become covertly involved, his advice fell on mostly deaf ears.

As Seymour Hersh tells us, after Kissinger overruled Davis, “A number of State Department officials and other sources expressed anger at Mr. Kissinger’s decision to recommend direct United States involvement in Angola. ‘He was given the best advice there was and it didn’t fit what he wanted to do,’ one official said. ‘He wanted to face off with the Russians right there – in Angola.’”²⁸²

Before discussing the American involvement in Angola, which is the subject of Chapters 5 through 7, however, it is important to understand why Angola, unlike Portugal’s two other major African colonies, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, was unique in the Lusitanian empire. The reasons for Angola’s exceptionalism made its path to independence not only a central issue in Lisbon’s internal political struggles, but also especially vulnerable to external interference.

²⁸² Seymour M. Hersh, “Angola-Aid Issue Opening Rifts in State Department,” *New York Times*, December 14, 1975, 2.

CHAPTER 4

THE COLONIAL QUESTION: SPINOLA VERSUS THE MFA

“We carried out the revolution in Portugal because we wanted to get out of Africa, but Spinola’s program could take generations, and neither we nor the Africans want to wait.”

MFA Officer²⁸³

“The decolonization of Angola has been set in motion; but it will be an intricate process laden with many problems.”

African Journalist Godwin Matatu²⁸⁴

This chapter first discusses Spinola’s persistent, if unsuccessful efforts, to play the leading role in determining the future of Portugal’s African colonies. The provisional president had originally outlined his decolonization program in his book. It entailed an indefinite, but lengthy process ending in a one-man, one-vote referendum by both black and whites to determine their future relationship with Portugal. However, the general’s idea about the pace and ultimate goal of decolonization were diametrically opposed to those of the majority of the MFA’s leadership, who wanted out of Africa as quickly as possible. Further, many official members of the first and second provisional governments also challenged the premises of his program.

The overwhelming opposition to Spinola’s program for the colonies was quickly manifested in the MFA’s highly secretive and rapid negotiation process with the PAIGC

²⁸³ As quoted in Marvine Howe, “Lisbon Indicates Self-Rule Policy,” *New York Times*, June 12, 1974, 9.

²⁸⁴ Godwin Matatu, “Angola: When the Guns Begin to Flower,” *Africa*, no. 39 (November 1974): 44.

in Guinea-Bissau and FRELIMO in Mozambique.²⁸⁵ In the case of the former, negotiations began in late May and concluded in late August. Without ever having to experience a transitional government, Guinea-Bissau officially gained its full independence on September 10, 1974.

Mozambique's path was somewhat longer. Talks between Portugal and FRELIMO began in Lusaka, Zambia in early June and concluded on September 7. The independence agreement established a transitional government headed by a Portuguese high commissioner, but dominated by FRELIMO, to oversee the colony's decolonization process. The new government became effective on September 23. As previously agreed upon, Mozambique became independent on June 25, 1975

These negotiations occurred even as General Spínola continued to elaborate upon his ideas about decolonization, as will be discussed. Having lost the struggle over both Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, the general then challenged the MFA over Angola. I will explain the reasons for his belief that Portugal needed to retain its hegemony over the colony for as long as possible, as well as why he thought that it was possible for Lisbon to do so. However, as we will see, the general also lost the battle over Angola, and with

²⁸⁵ PAIGC stands for "African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde." FRELIMO is "Front for the Liberation of Mozambique." Both the Portuguese and the PAIGC agreed to exclude the Cape Verde Islands, a major sticking point, from the negotiations on Guinea-Bissau's independence. Instead, the islanders, who provided the majority of the leaders to the PAIGC, independently voted to unite with Guinea-Bissau in July 1975. "Cape Verde Voters Back Plan to Merge with Guinea-Bissau," *New York Times*, July 3, 1975, 4.

it his presidency, as the MFA forced his resignation in late September 1974, ending the second provisional government.

I will conclude the discussion in this chapter by addressing the difficulties that the third provisional government, with General Costa Gomes as president, encountered in its efforts to resolve Angola's complex issues. The formidable barriers to a peaceful path to Angolan independence created a great potential for external interference. While the rapid deterioration of the January 1975 independence agreement between Lisbon and the three nationalist movements resulted, in part, from Lisbon's inability to mitigate, or at least contain, their mutual antagonisms, especially that of the FNLA toward the MPLA, the resort to the violent solution was fueled by external interference in the independence process, including that of the United States

The Spinola Program

As previously noted, General Spinola's ideas about the decolonization process conflicted with those of the majority of the MFA's leadership, who desired a rapid process with full independence as the end game. In contrast, the general had made it clear early on that while he accepted the principle of self-determination, he did not necessarily equate that principle to full independence, at least not in the near term.²⁸⁶ In

²⁸⁶ Spinola's ideas about the meaning of self-determination, interestingly, appear to be a reiteration of the agreed-upon American and Portuguese definition of the word reached during the Kennedy Administration

Portugal and the Future he had outlined three options. The first option, which he rejected, proposed a complete severance of ties with the African colonies. The second option essentially involved maintaining the extant Metropole-African territories relationship. The General also rejected this option, believing that it would hasten the already well-developed disintegration of Portugal's relationships with the colonies – the result of the colonial wars. The third option, the General's favored solution to the colonial question, called for the creation of "a vast Lusitanian community" through peaceful means and "built upon the progressive autonomy of all its parts."²⁸⁷

As the general continued to clarify his thoughts on the colonial question during the spring and summer of 1974, it became clear that he, much like Salazar and Caetano before him, did not believe that the African territories were as yet ready for full independence. In a late April meeting with representatives of the Portuguese Democratic Movement, a loose coalition of liberal and left wing groups, Spínola reportedly told those present "that they should not confuse self-determination with independence. He considered that there had not been sufficient preparation for the people to make a

(as discussed in Chapter 1). That definition, as previously explained, included the understanding that decolonization did not necessarily equate to complete sovereignty.

²⁸⁷ This interpretation of the most important parts of General Spínola's book were provided by journalist Jose Shercliffe, "Sad Last Chapter to a General's Book," *New York Times*, March 16, 1974, 4.

decision on their own future at this moment.”²⁸⁸ The general further noted that there needed to be an indeterminate period of preparation during which the Portuguese would accelerate economic, political and administrative reconstruction and development in the colonies. Following this unspecified interregnum, the territorial inhabitants, both black and white, would have the option of maintaining ties with Portugal in the form of a commonwealth or of total independence.²⁸⁹

As argued by historian Gerald Bender, the main reason for General Spínola’s emphasis on gradual decolonization was to provide time for the Portuguese authorities to foster the growth and vitality of multi-racial “third forces” within each of the colonies. These would act as a moderating force between the extremist white settlers on the one hand (that is, those who might emulate the Rhodesian whites and declare their independence from Portugal) and the militant black nationalists on the other (those who would settle for nothing less than full and immediate independence). The general apparently believed that the momentum of the nationalist movements for rapid and total independence could either be diluted or diverted into more pro-Portuguese channels by a multi-racial coalition of moderate black African and white settlers. Such a countervailing political force in the

²⁸⁸ Jose Shercliffe and Harry Debelius, “General Spínola Puts off Decision on Colonies,” *New York Times*, April 30, 1974, 1.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

colonies could also move them in the direction of a continued, close association with Lisbon.

Spinola had written about the formation of such “third forces” in his book. He realized, however, that they were virtually non-existent in the colonies and would remain so until Portugal undertook major reforms of the colonial economic, political and administrative structures. Consequently, as Gerald Bender tells us, as part of his plan, “the General called for massive infusions of aid...for the advancement of the Africans. He hoped that an unequivocal manifestation of Portugal’s moral and material commitments to the rapid advancement of the African populations would cause the nationalists to lay down their arms and return home as participants in the building of new countries.”²⁹⁰

Barriers to Implementing the Spinola Program

The general’s grandiose scheme was improbable, if not impossible, given the realities of Portugal’s own economic and political circumstances, not to mention those in the colonies. His program, first and foremost, required a rapid and enormous commitment of resources that Portugal lacked, given its tenuous economic situation both before and after the coup.²⁹¹ Lisbon’s failure to adapt to economic globalization, undermined in part by

²⁹⁰ Bender, “Portugal and Her Colonies Join the Twentieth Century,” 144.

²⁹¹ British historian and author, Fred Brigland, who at one point in his distinguished career had been a leading supporter of Jonas Savimbi and UNITA, succinctly defined the decaying socio-economic condition

the massive expenditures required to fight the African wars, had left the country in a predictably enervated and outmoded economic position. As analyzed by Kenneth Maxwell, “In an expanding world economy, with abundant investment, rising tourism, emigrant remittances and the ability to impose labor discipline, Spínola’s program might just have worked.”²⁹² At the time of the coup and in its immediate aftermath, none of these favorable conditions pertained as the global economic system entered a lengthy period of recession. Increasing inflation, decreasing wages, and widespread labor unrest in the aftermath of the coup further weakened Portugal’s own economic situation.

Lisbon’s ability to finance the type of reconstruction and development in the colonies envisioned by the Spínola plan was also politically unworkable. It required a lengthy and orderly disengagement, since the general’s program for Portugal’s own economic renovation depended upon the wealth the country derived from its colonial exploitation.²⁹³ Yet, the leadership of the MFA had no desire for the country to continue

of Portugal just before the April coup by noting: “Crippled economically by the costs of its overseas wars, tiny Portugal was...experiencing Europe’s highest rate of inflation at 23 percent, and had lost so many people abroad that its population had been reduced from more than 10 million at the beginning of the 1960s to only 8.6 million. Paris became the second-largest Portuguese city in the world, with more than 600,000 émigrés.” Fred Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company, Ltd., 1986), 104.

²⁹² Maxwell, “The Thorns of the Portuguese Revolution,” 259.

²⁹³ Regarding Portugal’s dependence on the resources of its colonies, Kenneth Maxwell notes, “It was precisely through the exercise of sovereignty that Portugal was able to obtain any advantages at all from its ‘civilizing mission.’ And these advantages were very considerable: cheap raw materials, large earnings from invisibles, the transfer of export earnings, gold and diamonds, protected markets for her wines and cotton textiles...Portugal faced real losses if control of her African territories was ended.” *Ibid.*, 251. A CIA study, prepared only a few days after the Portuguese coup, underscored the importance of the African

its “civilizing mission,” most having witnessed firsthand the hypocrisy of such a myth. The movement, still the key power broker in Lisbon’s evolving political situation, was highly critical of the plan. The MFA, after all, had precipitated its coup in large part to extricate Portugal from its colonial quagmire. Spínola’s lengthy decolonization plan undermined this justification and jeopardized the movement’s revolutionary plans for Portugal itself.

Moreover, as observed by Gerald Bender, from the earliest days following the April coup, many politically active Portuguese assessed the Spínola plan “as too restrictive to lead to a permanent (and satisfactory) settlement of the wars.”²⁹⁴ Most in the government agreed. Mirroring the perspective of many of Lisbon’s abundant political parties and movements, the Minister of Interterritorial Coordination, António de Almeida Santo, declared that, “he saw no reason why it was necessary to pass through a transitional stage of self-determination. The Provisional Government immediately adopted his position.”²⁹⁵

territories to the Portuguese economy. The document noted, in part, that “Except for Portuguese Guinea, the African provinces do in fact offer significant immediate and long-term economic returns...Large corporations in the metropole control virtually all aspects of the territories’ modern economic sectors, including local industry, commerce, banking, and plantation agriculture. The metropole receives preferential trade treatment, and it controls the territories’ sizable foreign exchange receipts.” On Angola, the study estimated that the colony came close to paying for its own economic development and for fighting the insurgents. Central Intelligence Agency, *Intelligence Memorandum*, “The Coup in Portugal (Washington, D.C., April 27, 1974), p. 1 [Database on-line]; available from FOIA.CIA.Gov.

²⁹⁴ Bender, “Portugal and Her Colonies Join the Twentieth Century,” 144.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

In the colonies, the response of the African nationalists to the Spínola plan, given their hostility to anything that smacked of neo-colonialism, was predictably and overwhelmingly negative. Mozambique's FRELIMO labeled the plan "liberal fascism" or "democratic colonialism."²⁹⁶ Historian Norrie MacQueen tells us that Angola's Agostinho Neto, while on a speaking tour in Western Europe in late April 1974, "fired some warning shots across Spínolist bows by warning that the MPLA would reject a change of regime in Lisbon which 'was no more than a simple demagogic manoeuvre with the sole objective of perpetuating colonial domination in a slightly different form.'"²⁹⁷ Having struggled for years to break free of the Portuguese, the nationalists were not inclined to accept any solution other than a speedy process toward total independence under their watchful aegis.

Finally, the minority white settlers, even if aligned with pro-Portuguese blacks in a multi-racial "third force," were still a "minority." Their non-participation in the anti-colonial struggle and general support for Lisbon's imperial policies translated into a lack of credibility and receptivity among the majority black population. Thus, it is doubtful they could have constituted a viable political alternative to the liberation movements

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 159. The Neto quote is from the Lisbon newspaper, *Expresso*, of May 4, 1974.

except through force of arms, a situation that the MFA was determined to avoid at all costs.²⁹⁸

Spinola Details his Decolonization Plan

Despite all the strong objections and barriers to his lengthy decolonization plan, and even as the negotiations between the Portuguese and the PAIGC and FRELIMO were just getting started, the general persisted in advancing his ideas about the future status of Portugal's colonies. On 11 June, for example, in what was billed as "a major policy statement on the colonial question," Spinola reiterated his idea of gradual decolonization. Now, however, he not only added more details, but also introduced several new dimensions that if included in the negotiations would certainly have delayed independence indefinitely.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ According to Bender, most of the whites in the colonies welcomed the Spinola plan. "In the colonies, with the exception of a few thousand reactionary whites who hoped to maintain white hegemony by emulating their Rhodesian racist counterparts, most of the conservative whites warmly embraced Spinola's multiracial third force as the best solution." However, as the situation in Portugal changed, with Spinola becoming increasingly isolated from the MFA power brokers, and with his gradual decolonization plan in shambles by late summer 1974 as Portugal reached agreement on independence for both Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, some whites decided to jump onto the nationalist bandwagon. "More enlightened colonial whites, recognizing the impending reality of independence, decided to join front organizations which were openly running interference for the nationalists –such as the pressure group 'Mozambican Democrats' which is campaigning vociferously for FRELIMO's becoming the next government of Mozambique." Bender, "Portugal and Her Colonies Join the Twentieth Century," 145. Many whites, however, decided to leave their respective "new countries," emigrating to Rhodesia or South Africa, or returning to Portugal, which only increased the strains on the severely dysfunctional Portuguese economic situation.

²⁹⁹ Spinola presented his June 11, 1974 remarks on his vision for the future status of the African territories at a ceremony for the newly appointed Portuguese governors to Angola and Mozambique. My discussion of his speech is primarily based on the following. Marvine Howe, "Lisbon Indicates Self-Rule Policy,"

While the idea of self-determination was prominent in the General's rhetoric, for the first time he used the word "independence," suggesting that full sovereignty was the ultimate objective of the decolonization process. However, as he had maintained all along, such independence would be predicated upon a popular vote, or referendum, by all concerned to determine the ultimate political solution. That is, as it related to his previous writings and thoughts on the subject, both black and white inhabitants of the colonies would have the choice of "federation, confederation, community or the mere existence of totally independent states." Moreover, he continued, the right to choose would come only after the Portuguese had established, "a climate of freedom and perfect functioning of democratic institutions."

Spinola then described a four-stage colonial disengagement plan that would deeply involve Portuguese oversight, management and resources. He expressed his concern for the position of the white settlers, as well as those black Africans who fought for the colonial army, and was contemptuous of the nationalists groups' claim to sole representation. According to journalist Marvine Howe, the provisional president's remarks stressed that all sectors of the populations would have their say in the territory's future and that "all would have an equal voice with the nationalists." Apparently referring to his preferred "third forces," he then noted, "We will not abandon them in the cowardly

New York Times, June 12, 1974, 12; "Spinola Explains Decolonization," *New York Times*, June 16, 1974, 191; Wilfred Burchett, "Is Portugal Marching Backward?" *Manchester Guardian*, June 26, 1974.

search for an easy way out or in a demagogic search for popularity.” Finally, in a bit of “Spinola spin,” he addressed the open-ended nature of his plan by noting, “In lieu of a timetable... decolonization would take place ‘rapidly without haste.’ He emphasized that the speed would depend on ‘the broad participation of the different forces present,’”³⁰⁰ suggesting again his hope that the political development of “third forces” in the colonies would guarantee an outcome other than full independence.³⁰¹

Whatever the reasons for Spinola’s motivations – a penchant for neo-colonialism or practical, hard-nosed economics, or probably a healthy dose of both – few of his colleagues on the JSN or the MFA’s Coordinating Committee agreed with him because, as noted by Kenneth Maxwell, “The MFA had made the coup to end the war not perpetuate it.”³⁰² Needless to say, those MFA officers who attended the policy announcement discussed above strenuously criticized the general’s remarks. Their main criticisms focused on the open-ended nature of the Spinola plan, the costs to Portugal of its implementation, and, most significantly, the fact that the African nationalists would not accept it.³⁰³ In the aftermath of the general’s statement, then, his plan for

³⁰⁰ Howe, “Lisbon Indicates Self-Rule Policy,” 9.

³⁰¹ Henry Giniger, among others, reported that General Spinola’s hope for the African colonies was that they would eventually vote to join in a large Portuguese commonwealth. For Spinola, a vote for independence “would mean a defeat for Portugal.” Henry Giniger, “Why the Old Soldier in Lisbon Faded Away,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1975, 8.

³⁰² Maxwell, “The Thorns of the Portuguese Revolution,” 260.

³⁰³ Howe, “Lisbon Indicates Self-Rule Policy,” 9.

decolonization, which had very little support from the beginning, began to quickly unravel.

The Disintegration of the Spinola Plan

As the Spinola-MFA struggle intensified through June and July, the tenacious general suffered two major blows to his decolonization plan. First, in late July, he conceded to the MFA's demand that he publicly promulgate Law 7/74. The law stated, in part, "The principle that a solution to the overseas wars is political and not military implies, in accordance with the United Nations charter, the recognition by Portugal of the right to self-determination by the people. The recognition of the principle of self-determination, with all its consequences, includes the acceptance of independence for overseas territories."³⁰⁴ However, as claimed by historian Norrie MacQueen, following the nationwide announcement, Vasco Lourenco, "the MFA luminary," met with Spinola, apparently to congratulate him on the speech. Lourenco indicated that he and other members of the MFA in attendance found the general very agitated, "as if he had just taken a beating. We congratulated him on his speech and he replied: 'I know that this is what you wanted. But now Angola is for me.'" Although embattled and forced to

³⁰⁴ "Lisbon Recognizes Rights of Colonies," *New York Times*, July 25, 1974, 10. Sao Tome and Principe, two very small islands in the Gulf of Guinea, were apparently on no one's agenda during the often heated disagreements over the other colonies and decolonization. With little or no fanfare, the two were granted their independence in July 1975, following a year of transitional government headed by the islands' first president, Manuel Pinto da Costa. "Sao Tome and Principe Celebrate Independence," *New York Times*, July 13, 1975, 3.

compromise on Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, the general was not about to wave a white flag on Angola, because he saw it as ““destined to occupy one of the most prominent positions in a Luso-Afro-Brazilian Community.””³⁰⁵

The second jolt to General Spínola’s position within the MFA and government, especially as it related to his now diluted plan for gradual decolonization, occurred nearly simultaneously with the issuance of Law 7/74. The MFA leadership recalled his close associate and head of the Portuguese military government in Angola, General Jaime Silverio Marques, from Luanda. Spínola had appointed General Marques to the Luanda position. According to historian Fernando A. Guimaraes, however, Marques’ tenure as Angolan governor-general from 1962-1966, the early years of the unfolding insurgency in Angola, made his 1974 return a most unwelcome event for all three liberation movements. That aside, his brief tour in Angola during 1974 was perhaps most notable for his attempts, undoubtedly with the encouragement and backing of General Spínola, to organize political opposition to the nationalist groups, especially the leftist MPLA. In a replay of the old “divide and conquer” strategies employed by the pre-coup

³⁰⁵ MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 160. MacQueen’s source for the Lourenço quote is from Jose Friere Antunes, *O Factor Africano* (Lisbon: Bertrand, 1990), 100. Spínola’s comment on Angola is from his own memoirs, *Pais sem Rumor*, 311.

colonial administrators, Marques established contacts with the MPLA's primary nemesis, the FNLA, through President Mobutu of Zaire, in what Guimaraes has described as an attempt to "outflank the MPLA."³⁰⁶

According to an Associated Press dispatch from Lisbon, the MFA apparently used the July outbreak of rioting, strikes, and racial violence in Luanda as a pretext for the recall of General Marques.³⁰⁷ Subsequently, the MFA leadership reorganized the Angolan administrative structure by establishing a governing "junta," and named Rear Admiral Antonio Rosa Coutinho, a leftist and JSN member, to head the group.³⁰⁸ In this new position, and later as high commissioner from November 1974 to mid-January 1975, both the FNLA and UNITA frequently accused the admiral, and apparently justifiably so, of supporting the MPLA at their expense. British historian Norrie MacQueen noted that the admiral's "MPLA sympathies were made plain by his permitting the movement access to the military radio network to build its support base. The origins of Rosa Coutinho's partisanship may have been personal as well as ideological. During the war he had been

³⁰⁶ Guimaraes, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 92. A prime example of Portuguese attempts to contain the insurgency through divide and conquer tactics was their employment of Africans in the colonial army to fight the African nationalists, thereby increasing ethnic rivalries and strife.

³⁰⁷ The AP report, which was carried in the *New York Times*, noted that Marques was recalled "after a week of turmoil in the African colony in which 54 persons were killed." "Lisbon Names New Head of Government," *New York Times*, July 25, 1974, 6.

³⁰⁸ Ibid. Admiral Coutinho soon found that governing the colony through the junta was ineffective. Acting upon his advice, in late November 1974, the MFA leadership in Lisbon dissolved the body and appointed the admiral as high commissioner. MacQueen, "The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa," 173.

captured and mistreated by the UPA (the earlier incarnation of the FNLA) and as a result nursed a deep antipathy for Roberto and all his works.”³⁰⁹

Although Spínola approved Admiral Coutinho’s appointment, perhaps having no other option, the admiral’s new position was critical to the strengthening of the MPLA as the movement attempted to out-manoeuvre the other two nationalists groups for power before the Alvor agreement of January 1975. His presence in Luanda at this crucial time in Angolan history became “the fly in the ointment” for Spínola’s Angolan decolonization plan. As MacQueen pointed out, with Coutinho’s replacement of Silverio Marques, “The political colour of the Portuguese administration in Angola now moved to the other end of the spectrum. The former Salazarist was now effectively replaced by a pro-MPLA Marxist and the consequences for Spínola’s project in Angola were considerable.”³¹⁰

Admiral Coutinho was not the only MPLA sympathizer in the Armed Forces Movement or the Portuguese government. Agostinho Neto enjoyed close connections

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 164.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 163-164. Admiral Coutinho’s leading critics, especially Mobutu of Zaire and Holden Roberto of the FNLA, sometimes referred to him as “the Red Admiral,” expressing their perspective of the admiral’s ideological disposition. While he was to the left on the political spectrum and certainly pro-MPLA, the admiral was no Communist, as Mario Soares, the Socialist Party leader indicated to Henry Kissinger. The latter was concerned about the admiral’s influence on Portuguese politics after his return from Luanda following the Alvor agreement in mid-January 1975. In a late January 1975 meeting between Soares and Kissinger, Soares noted that Coutinho didn’t like the Socialist leadership but that he was also leery about the heavy reliance of the MFA on the PCP for support. He then opined that Coutinho desired to establish his own political force somewhere between the Socialists and the Communists. Secretary of State Message 292048Z January 1976 to American Embassy, Lisbon, “Subject: Secretary’s Meeting with Mario Soares, 26 January 1976,” p. 3, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Portugal – State Department Telegrams From SecState – NODIS (2), Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.

with the leftist element in the MFA and both the Portuguese Socialist and Communist Parties. These ties dated back to his days as a student in Lisbon in the late 1940s. The MPLA also benefited from the small, educated, left-wing white constituency in Angola, and the leaders of the movement, as well as many in the rank-and-file membership, were largely mixed Angolan-Portuguese mesticos. These factors contributed to what MacQueen described as “a generalized undercurrent of sympathy for the MPLA in Lisbon’s revolutionary politics at this time.”³¹¹ But it was the admiral who was on-scene in Luanda and who was in the best position to lend a hand to Neto’s Popular Movement in thwarting Spínola’s plan for the colony – a task that the admiral undertook with relish until his own recall to Lisbon in January 1975.

Despite these setbacks, Spínola’s fight for Angola was not yet finished. In the middle of August, the Junta of National Salvation, reportedly acting on Spínola’s initiative,

³¹¹ MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 164-165. Kenneth Maxwell provides a detailed overview of Agostinho Neto’s intimate connections with the Portuguese left as well as the leadership of the PAIGC and FRELIMO in “Portugal and Africa: The Last Empire,” in *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940-1960*, eds. Prosser Gifford and William Rogers Louis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 354-355. In the late 1940s, among other associations, Neto was a member of the central committee for the youth component of the United Democratic Movement on Portugal (MUD), an anti-fascist organization that included PCP members, the future leader of the PAIGC, Amílcar Cabral, and Marcelino dos Santos of FRELIMO. At the same time, he also met Mario Soares, future leader of the Portuguese Socialist Party and one of post-coup Portugal’s foreign ministers, who also belonged to the MUD’s youth component. As Maxwell observed, “If Neto’s connections in the anti-Salazar underground made him suspect to Washington (as indeed such connections made Mario Soares until the April 1975 Portuguese elections revealed him to be the main democratic bulwark against communism), they were to stand him in good stead in Portugal after the April 25 coup. Unlike Holden Roberto, who had spent less than two years in Angola in his whole life, and almost no time in Portugal, Agostinho Neto knew the Portuguese Left from the inside.” *Ibid.*, 354.

issued a revised plan for Angola's decolonization, which called for a lengthy process beginning with the negotiating of ceasefires with the three nationalist movements. This was to be followed by the formation of a provisional government consisting not only of the nationalists, but also representation from other political and ethnic groups within the colony. Once these conditions had been met, the provisional government was to arrange for elections to a constituent assembly based on universal suffrage. The assembly would then draft a constitution spelling out, among other things, the future of the Portuguese-Angolan relationship. After the constitution was approved, the constituent assembly was to schedule new elections, again on a one-person, one-vote basis, to elect a governing legislative assembly.³¹²

The proposed plan was fraught with difficulties, not the least of which was the three nationalist movements' continuing commitment to immediate and unconditional independence - a condition they insisted the Portuguese agree to before they would negotiate a ceasefire. Spínola, however, viewed the transition period, expected to last up to three years, as the opportunity he needed to put his Angolan plan into motion. It gave him time, however limited, to oversee the formation of pro-Portuguese "third forces" in

³¹² My discussion of the revised plan for Angola is largely based on MacQueen's examination of the proposal in *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 165-166, and on "Lisbon Freeing Two Colonies," *New York Times*, August 11, 1974, 172, and "Lisbon Announces a Two-Year Plan to Free Angolans," *New York Times*, August 11, 1974, 1-2.

the colony, thereby improving the prospects for Angola's continued, close links to the metropole.³¹³

His somewhat guarded optimism for the plan's success, however, was short-lived. As to be expected, both the MPLA and FNLA rejected the plan. UNITA, which had engaged in an unofficial ceasefire with the Portuguese since June 1974, announced that it would only participate in the proposal if the other two movements agreed to it.³¹⁴ By late summer, then, Spínola's hopes for holding on to Angola appeared to have been dashed by the Angolan nationalists' perception that Lisbon had reversed its commitment to independence as promulgated in July's Law 7/74. Still, the general had one ace left up his sleeve – the Zairian connection – a link that had already been initiated by his friend and former military governor in Angola, General Jaime Silverio Marques.

Before discussing General Spínola's effort to use Zaire's President Mobutu to facilitate his neo-colonial plan for Angola, it is important to understand why he so persistently tried to force his long-term designs for the colony upon the provisional government and the MFA's leadership. The general based his ambitious program for Angola upon the belief that it was not only essential for Portugal's own economic

³¹³ According to Norrie MacQueen, despite the inherent difficulties of the plan, Spínola remained intent on making it work by personally overseeing the process and by steering "it in the desired direction." MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 169. The "desired direction," of course, was some type of neo-colonial arrangement between the metropole and Angola.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 166. Also, "Lisbon Announces A Two-Year Angola Plan," 2.

rehabilitation to continue to exploit its wealth, but also possible to do so given certain exceptional circumstances which, within the Lusitanian empire, pertained only to Angola.

The Flawed Empire

In the immediate post-coup time frame, Spínola and his supporters, which included the leaders of Portugal's major economic monopolies, believed that it was necessary to hold onto all of Portugal's African colonies.³¹⁵ However, their viewpoint was based as much on the psychological dimensions of the Portuguese empire as it was on more realistic considerations, such as the overseas territories' contributions to Portugal's neo-mercantilist economy. Less Angola and Mozambique, the colonies were often more economically burdensome than profitable. Moreover, their retention, especially in the cases of Portuguese Guinea and Mozambique, had become increasingly costly as the liberation movements in each grew in strength and popularity both before and after the April coup.

Guinea-Bissau was small and poor, with a total population of about 800,000 at the time of the Portuguese. The colony possessed few natural resources, and manufacturing

³¹⁵ Many of Portugal's major economic monopolies, or oligarchs, supported the Spínola plan for a very slow decolonization, perhaps generational in time, and for the development of Portugal along evolutionary lines. Their ideas conflicted with the radical leftist in the MFA who called for a rapid disengagement from the colonies and revolutionary socio-economic change in Portugal. Such a program, of course, threatened the interests of the monopolies whose financial stakes in various enterprises throughout the whole of southern Africa have been well documented by Kenneth Maxwell in "Portugal and Africa: The Last Empire," in *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940-1960*, eds. Prosser Gifford and William Rogers Louis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 357-359

and industrial development were virtually non-existent. It did process and export some agricultural products through the Portuguese company, CUF (Companhia Unias Fabril), to which General Spínola was connected by marriage.³¹⁶ The Cape Verde Islands, subsumed under the mantle of the PAIGC whose leaders were largely Cape Verdeans, were more important to NATO (and, hence, the United States) because of their strategic location than they were to Portugal.³¹⁷ São Tomé and Príncipe, little more than two very small dots in a large Atlantic Ocean were most notable for their exportation of primary commodities such as cocoa, coffee and sugar, all subject to frequent global price fluctuations. The economic value to Lisbon of these small, resource-challenged colonies was minimal. However, as noted by Kenneth Maxwell, Portugal's two largest and richest

³¹⁶ As reported in "Portugal, Africa and the Future," *Africa*, no. 35 (July 1974): 16.

³¹⁷ As previously discussed, the Portuguese and the PAIGC agreed to exclude the Cape Verde Islands from the independence negotiations on Guinea-Bissau. According to journalist Miguel Acoca, who covered the talks for the *Washington Post*, the MFA, under pressure from Washington, insisted that the islands be a separate issue from Guinea-Bissau's own independence. He argues that General Spínola also insisted on this condition, and that he still retained enough power in the government to influence the issue. Acoca explains that the anti-Communist Spínola "In his writings, has declared that Portugal could not permit the Cape Verde Islands, which lie on the sea lane plied by supertankers loaded with Middle East oil bound for Europe and the United States, to fall into Communist hands." Miguel Acoca, "Lisbon Officer Questions Long-Term U.S. Intentions," *Washington Post*, May 24, 1974. Foreign correspondent Jonathan C. Randal supports Acoca's assertions that the MFA wished to appease the United States on the Cape Verde Islands issue. He wrote that in early October, the French satirical weekly, *Le Canard Enchaîné*, alleged that Kissinger had influenced the MFA decision. The Secretary of State "let the revolutionary Portuguese leadership know in May that the 'United States was not opposed to independence for Guinea Bissau, but would not stand for the Portuguese giving up the Cape Verde Islands to the Guineans.' Kissinger's warning was based on fears that 'one day' the Soviets would set up a naval air base on the strategically located islands off the coast of West Africa if they ceased to be Portuguese." Jonathan C. Randal, "CIA Role is Alleged in Portugal," *Washington Post*, October 17, 1974.

colonies, Mozambique and Angola, were a different matter. In both colonies, but especially Angola, “The stakes...were very high indeed.”³¹⁸

Mozambique had contributed substantially to the metropole’s coffers. The colony exported all of its substantial annual cotton production and most of its sugar to Portugal at prices well below market value. Further, as Maxwell observed, “the wages of the Mozambique miners in South Africa were converted into gold shipments to Lisbon – in effect a hidden subsidy to the Portuguese war effort. During the three years before the coup, the official value of this gold amounted to at least \$180 million.”³¹⁹

Still, the military situation in Mozambique was much more problematic than that in Angola. In the latter, the three mutually hostile insurgent movements had made little headway in wresting territory away from the Portuguese colonial army. In contrast, at the time of the Portuguese coup, FRELIMO controlled over one-third of Mozambique, mainly in the north, and was successfully pressing its military operations southward. The harsh reality of the situation was that Portugal was losing in Mozambique. Intensifying Portuguese counterinsurgency operations there might slow, but would not prevent, a FRELIMO victory, even had the MFA decided to do so. Given these realities, and having been outmaneuvered by his opponents in the government and by the young officers of the MFA over Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, General Spínola, somewhat

³¹⁸ Maxwell, “Portugal and Africa: The Last Empire,” 358.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

begrudgingly, accepted the impending independence of both. Still, he tenaciously clung to a plan for Angola's gradual decolonization.

Angolan Exceptionalism and the Spinola Plan

Angola was noteworthy in comparison to Portugal's other colonies in Africa for three broadly categorized reasons. First, the territory was rich in natural resources – a latent regional economic powerhouse whose potentiality was only beginning to be realized in the early 1970s. Secondly, Angola's white settler population, at over 300,000, was the largest in Africa outside of the Republic of South Africa. Many of them desired to continue at least a commonwealth-type arrangement with Portugal.³²⁰ Thirdly, the colony's three liberation movements seemed incapable of setting aside their differences to form a united front. Moreover, formidable discord and factionalism within the MPLA – the Communist-fearing Spinola's *bête noire* - made it susceptible to divide and conquer tactics.³²¹ These distinct Angolan qualities came together in somewhat of a synergistic

³²⁰ Gerald Bender and P. Stanley Yoder's analysis of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the white settler population in Angola, which they concluded was about 335,000 at the time of the April coup, underscores the importance of this segment of the population in any referendum on the future Angolan-Portuguese relationship. As they noted, "The vast majority of Portuguese in Angola, relatively uneducated and unskilled, are cognizant that there are few or no economic possibilities for them in Portugal; at the same time they fear there will be no place for them in an independent Angola. Their reaction within months after the overthrow of the Portuguese dictatorship in April, 1974 was to attempt to maintain the status quo through protest and violence." Gerald J. Bender and P. Stanley Yoder, "Whites in Angola on the Eve of Independence: The Politics of Numbers," *Africa Today* 21, no. 4 (Fall 1974): 37.

³²¹ The historiography of Angola both before and following the Portuguese coup is rich with analyses of these three broad categories that made Angola unique in comparison with Portugal's other African colonies. Among the most notable studies that assess Angola's exceptional circumstances are the following: the previously cited two-volume work by John A. Marcum, *The Anatomy of an Explosion*

fashion to produce an enticing situation for those, like General Spínola, who believed continued exploitation of Angola's natural wealth was necessary for Portugal's own economic recovery.³²²

Angola's Natural Resources

Angola was the real jewel in the Lusitanian empire's crown, especially from an economic standpoint. The colony had experienced an economic boom beginning in the early 1960s, despite the commencement of guerrilla warfare in 1961. In fact, according to author George Wright, it was the onset of the insurgency that prompted the Salazar

(1950-1962) and *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare (1962-1972)*; Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*; Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*; MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*; Maxwell, "Portugal and Africa: The Last Empire," and "The Thorns of the Portuguese Revolution;" Guimaraes, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*; also William Minter, *Portuguese Africa and the West* (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1972) and *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, , 1994). Notable studies focusing on Angola's people, especially the ethnic and regional dimensions of the nation's demographics, include: Bender and Yoder, "Whites in Angola on the Eve of Independence: The Politics of Numbers;" Basil Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm: Angola's People* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company); Christine Messiant, "Angola: The Challenge of Statehood," in *History of Central Africa: The Contemporary Years since 1960*, 131-165, eds. David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 1998); Marcum, "The Anguish of Angola: On Becoming Independent in the Last Quarter of the Twentieth Century." The sections on Angola from *Africa Contemporary Record, Annual Survey and Documents, 1974-1974 and 1975-1976* (New York: Africana Publishing Company) detail the qualitative and quantitative aspects of Angola's economic wealth. The oil wealth of Angola's Cabinda enclave, as well as the ethnic composition of its people and the activities of the FNLA, MPLA and the two branches of the Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave (FLEC) in the province, which is separated from Angola proper by a thin strip of Zairian territory, is detailed in Phyllis M Martin, "The Cabinda Connection: An Historical Perspective," *African Affairs* 76, no. 301 (1977): 47-59.

³²² Regarding Angola's economic value to Portugal, and hence to the Spínola plan, Kenneth Maxwell has observed, "...while Portugal was herself in chronic deficit in her foreign transactions, the balance of the escudo areas as a whole showed a healthy surplus. This surplus was based preeminently on Angola's earnings: for the process of expansion and development in Portugal to succeed, Angola's retention for a number of years seemed essential." Maxwell, "The Thorns of the Portuguese Revolution," 259-260.

regime to implement reforms in its colonial policy in order to spur economic growth. This was not done for entirely altruistic reasons, but rather to bring in additional revenues and support for the Portuguese counterinsurgency efforts. Portugal's economic reforms included the decision to allow liberal foreign investment in the colony, most notably from the United States, South Africa and Western Europe. Lisbon also actively encouraged Portuguese involvement in joint ventures with foreign corporations, making its metropolitan entrepreneurs stakeholders in Angola's future and further cementing the Lisbon-Luanda axis. As a result of these initiatives, Angola's economic growth averaged thirteen percent during the entire decade.³²³

Oil, more than another other natural resource, led the Angolan economic boom of the 1960s, which accelerated in the early 1970s as the Cabinda Gulf Oil Company successfully exploited its virtual monopoly of the enclave's black gold. Phyllis M. Martin, a historian of African colonial and post-colonial history, has analyzed the growing significance of the 1959 discovery of large oil reserves off the Cabindan coast to the Angolan, and thus, the Portuguese economy. Despite the enclave's wealth in timber, agricultural and mineral resources, primarily phosphates and potassium, Cabindan exports in 1962 comprised only 1.27 percent of Angola's total. By mid-1972, however, that figure had risen to 25 percent, "the increase largely due to the exploitation of

³²³ Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*, 14. American investment was concentrated in the extractive sector, primarily diamonds (through the Anglo-American Corporation), iron ore, and most importantly, oil.

offshore oil by the Cabinda Gulf Oil Company. In 1974, for the first time, crude oil was Angola's major source of foreign exchange most of it coming from Cabinda. The taxes and royalties that Gulf Oil paid to the Luanda government in that year made up some 40 percent of the Angolan budget."³²⁴

Oil production's contribution to Angola's surging economy was supplemented by large annual increases in the export of coffee, diamonds, iron ore, cotton, and a handful of other staples. From 1972 to 1973, for example, while oil exports rose by nearly 63 percent, raw cotton exports rose by 118 percent, coffee by nearly 35 percent, diamonds 26.3 percent, and iron ore 19.7 percent.³²⁵ After the Portuguese coup, as labor unrest wracked the colony's economy and racial conflicts arose, production in Angola's major

³²⁴ Martin, "The Cabinda Connection," 56-57. In an ironic twist, during the 1975 civil war, the Cabinda Gulf Oil Company, an American corporation and the largest foreign investor in all of Angola, continued its operations largely uninterrupted, protected by Cuban and MPLA soldiers, while the American-backed FNLA and UNITA struggled to dislodge the MPLA and its Cuban supporters from Luanda. George Wright argues that such an incongruity belies a strictly Marxist-Leninist interpretation of history. He notes that a concept that emerged, indeed, stood out, in his study is that "the US imperial state has a 'relative autonomy' in relation to US capital as it carries out foreign policy. This was particularly evident when the Reagan administration supported destabilization of Angola while Gulf Oil, which provided the Angolan government over 65 per cent of its foreign exchange, lobbied the administration to normalize relations with Angola." Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation*, ix. British journalist and author, Colin Legum, has supported this argument in numerous works on the Angolan civil war, including his early article on the war, "Foreign Intervention in Angola," in *Africa Contemporary Record, Annual Survey and Documents, 1975-1976* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1976), A3-A38.

³²⁵ "Angola," *Africa Contemporary Record, Annual Survey and Documents, 1974-1975* (Africana Publishing Company, 1975), B543.

exports fell off slightly. The exception was Cabindan oil, which increased nearly 100 percent from 1973 through late 1974.³²⁶

Added to the revenues generated by exploitation of Angola's riches were the substantial remittances received from both Zaire and Zambia for their use of the Benguela railway. This important transportation network connects the copper areas of Zaire's Shaba (formerly Katanga) province and northern Zambia to the Atlantic Ocean port of Lobito (Benguela's seaport). Commercial traffic on this nearly 1,000 mile rail line also carried essential imports to Zaire and Zambia, and thousands of Angolan laborers were employed in off-loading and on-loading operations in Lobito. The only alternatives to Zaire and Zambia's use of this indispensable lifeline to the Atlantic's seaways were expensive, slow, and inefficient.³²⁷

Of final importance to the Angolan economic surge of the 1960 and early 1970s, and to the Portuguese treasury, were the South African investment and remittances associated

³²⁶ "Angola," *Africa Contemporary Record, Annual Survey and Documents, 1975-1976* (Africana Publishing Company, 1976), B436. The ACR reported that crude oil exports rose from 5,755 (in million escudos) in 1973 to 10,789 as of September 1974. In 1973, the United States became the leading importer of Angolan goods, outpacing Portugal by nearly three percent in both 1973 and 1974, and the EEC countries of the Netherlands, West Germany, and the United Kingdom by fourteen and twenty-two percent, in each of those years, respectively. Ibid.

³²⁷ Zaire's alternative route lay in railroad and Congo River transshipment to the Zairian port of Matadi whose cargo-handling capacity, at any rate, was small compared to that of Lobito. Zambia's closed borders with Rhodesia prohibited shipments through that country to Mozambique's seaports. The TanZam railroad, financed and constructed by the People's Republic of China in the late 1960s, carried some Zambian exports and imports to and from Dar es Salaam, in Tanzania. However, as pointed out by Kenneth Maxwell, its capacity was well below that of the Benguela railroad and the facilities at the Dar es Salaam terminal were congested. Maxwell, "Portugal and Africa: The Last Empire," 344.

with the construction and operation of the Cunene River hydroelectric complex in southern Angolan, which brought both power and water to Namibia (Southwest Africa). Construction on this immense project consisting of over 200 dams inside Angola, but with its electrical generating plants inside Namibia, began in 1969 after Portugal agreed to the South African plan to use the river's energy to develop and exploit Namibia's vast mineral resources, including uranium and diamonds.

Given Angola's diversified and booming economy, it is little wonder that General Spínola and his supporters regarded the retention of Angola, for as long as possible, as essential to Portugal's own economic well-being and development. Of paramount importance, of course, was that Spínola believed that both the presence of a substantial number of fearful white settlers and the hostility among Angola's liberation movements enabled his long-range plan for Angola, subjects to which I now turn.

Angola's Whites

Following the April coup, a number of political movements developed in Angola. These organizations spanned the whole range of attitudes and positions on the direction of the colony's future. Other than the three nationalist movements, however, there was a notable lack of strictly black African political groupings, because, as offered by historian Norrie MacQueen, "The three guerrilla movements in their different ideological and ethnic facets appeared adequately to represent the various aspirations of the African

intelligentsia as well as the broader masses.”³²⁸ Within the substantial white settler community, however, more than thirty political movements arose in the aftermath of the coup. According to the *African Contemporary Record*, the Angolan liberation movements opposed these “phantom parties,” because most were led by their opponents, “and seemed designed either openly to defend settler interests or to divert African support.”³²⁹

Despite the ongoing insurgency, which by 1964 the Portuguese had managed to contain to small isolated areas of the country as a low-intensity conflict, Angola’s booming economy, based on its natural mineral and agricultural wealth, had served as a magnet to Portugal’s impoverished and unemployed or underemployed thousands. As analyzed by Gerald Bender and his colleague, P. Stanley Yoder, these settlers were, by and large, semi- or unskilled laborers, with little education and fearful of any change that might threaten the perquisites they enjoyed as white Portuguese. “As the largest and richest of the Portuguese colonies, Angola attracted the most white settlers – a large number of whom are intransigently opposed to any change in the political or economic

³²⁸ MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 162.

³²⁹ “Angola,” *African Contemporary Record*, 1974-1975, B529. The estimate on the white population ranged from 350,000 to a high of 750,000. Historians Gerald Bender and P. Stanley Yoder, however, assessed the settler numbers at no more than 335,000. Bender and Yoder, “Whites in Angola,” 37. Even assuming that this low-end estimate is reasonably accurate, Angola’s white population was still second only to the Republic of South Africa in all of Africa.

status quo.”³³⁰ It was upon the fears of these majority settler stakeholders - and not the reactionary white political groups with their potential to declare Angolan independence or the minority liberal white movements, which tended to favor a more pro-black nationalist position - that General Spínola intended to capitalize in his quest for the formation of third forces within Angola’s socio-economic strata.³³¹ His efforts to do so will be discussed later in this chapter.

Angola’s National Liberation Movements

In addition to what he saw as a favorable white settler situation in Angola, the existence of three fiercely competitive liberation movements reinforced Spínola’s hopes for his Angolan plan. In late July 1974 following the proclamation of Law 7/74, the MPLA and FNLA had agreed, in principle, to the formation of a united front.³³² However, as in the many historical African attempts to unite the MPLA and FNLA, the long-standing hostility between Holden Roberto and Agostinho Neto undermined the

³³⁰ Bender and Yoder, “Whites in Angola,” 23.

³³¹ The two most extreme white groups were the Angolan Resistance Front (FRA), an openly racist party led by ex-serviceman Pompílio da Cruz, which in early October 1974 unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow the MFA junta led by Admiral Coutinho, and the Angolan Christian Democratic Party (PCDA), led by António Ferronha. Although this party appeared moderate at first, its innocuous name belied its covert racist nature and its propensity for violence, which manifested itself in white rioting in the fall of 1974. MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 162 and “Angola,” *Africa Contemporary Record, 1974-1975*, B529

³³² The heads of state of the Congo (Brazzaville), Tanzania, Zambia and Zaire brokered the deal that, according to African journalist Raph Uwechue, attempted to “hammer out a common front solid enough for presentation to the Portuguese.” Raph Uwechue, “Angola’s Hour,” *Africa*, no. 38 (October 1974): 7.

agreement and the two most powerful movements quickly resumed their mutually antagonistic ways.

John Marcum's two-volume study of the Angolan revolution provides the most detailed and accurate picture of the internecine struggle among all three nationalist movements. Their rivalry, which included violence against each other on a par with the violence against the Portuguese, was based, in part, on ethnic, class, regional and ideological differences. However, their inability to reconcile, or at least temporarily set aside, their differences in order to form a united front against the Portuguese resulted mostly from the personalities and egos of the three leaders themselves.³³³

Then, too, Jonas Savimbi, the leader of UNITA, the weakest militarily of the three movements, had defected from the FNLA in 1964, citing Roberto's authoritarianism as the reason. Additionally, he had apparently cooperated with the Portuguese in the early 1970s, essentially giving them a free hand to move against both the MPLA and FNLA in Eastern Angola without having to worry about UNITA's guerrillas. After the Portuguese coup, the MFA seized many of the PIDE and military documents outlining this collaborative effort and released some of the details of the operation. The exposure of Savimbi's treason further aroused the FNLA and MPLA's distrust of UNITA's

³³³ Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. I, *The Anatomy of an Explosion*, and vol. II, *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare*, passim.

opportunistic leader and created another divide-and-conquer opportunity for Spínola's Angolan plan.³³⁴

Importantly, the MPLA itself was severely divided among three factions. The main rivalry to Neto's leadership came from his former deputy, Daniel Chipenda, who directed the MPLA's operation in Eastern Angola, beginning in 1966, from his base in Zambia. Chipenda, an Ovimbundu like UNITA's Jonas Savimbi, was probably the most knowledgeable and effective military commander within any of the three nationalist movements. He commanded an estimated 2,000-3,000 battle-tested MPLA guerrillas, and his ongoing rivalry with Neto presented an opportunity to seriously weaken the MPLA by exploiting the increasingly divisive internal struggle.³³⁵

General Spínola's Last Hurrah

Given the stakes and opportunities involved in the volatile Angolan environment, in mid-September 1974, only two weeks before his resignation from the presidency, General Spínola decided to play the Zairian card and called upon President Mobutu, the major sponsor of the FNLA's Holden Roberto, for assistance in his Angolan strategy.

³³⁴ For a discussion of the Savimbi-Portuguese cooperation, see William Minter, *Operation Timber: Pages from the Savimbi Dossier* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1988), and "The Savimbi Letters: The Long Treason of UNITA," in *Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa*, eds. Ellen Ray, William Scrap, and Karl Van Meter (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1979), 220-230.

³³⁵ Chipenda's Ovimbundu ethnicity also set him apart from the majority of the MPLA's leadership, which was largely Mbundu or Mestizo.

In a last-ditch effort to hold onto Angola, he made a brief and secretive trip to Sal (in the Cape Verde Islands) where he met with President Mobutu, accompanied by Holden Roberto. It should be noted that at the time of the Sal meeting, only one of the three liberations movements, UNITA, had agreed to a ceasefire in Angola, and that had yet to be formalized. The MPLA and Portuguese began observing a de facto ceasefire after the pro-MPLA Admiral Coutinho's arrival in Luanda in late July, but there was no de jure agreement. Neither an informal nor formal arrangement existed between the FNLA and the Portuguese. In fact, Holden Roberto, known for his belligerence, vowed in July that his FNLA would keep on fighting, claiming, "We will step up our operations. This is the only alternative for our group. We will fight for another 13 years if necessary."³³⁶

The inability of the Portuguese government to negotiate formal ceasefires with each of the nationalist movements has led some observers of Spínola's Sal meeting with Mobutu to suggest it was nothing more than a effort to get the FNLA, the strongest and most militant of the three groups, to agree to a ceasefire. Nicholas Ashford, reporting for *The Times* of London, opined that Spínola's purpose for the meeting was to solicit Mobutu's support in achieving a peaceful transfer of power in Angola. This included asking "Zaire to persuade the FNLA to lay down its arms and take part in peace negotiations."³³⁷ Also,

³³⁶ Thomas A. Johnson, "Angola Rebels Refuse to Form a Joint Front for Truce Talks," *New York Times*, July 14, 1974, 12.

³³⁷ Nicholas Ashford, "Portugal Discusses future of Angola with Zaire," *The Times*, September 16, 1974, 6.

in his memoirs, *Pais sem Rumor*, Spínola revealed that he had accepted an invitation from Mobutu for a meeting and that the two had reached no agreement other than a pledge of non-interference in Angolan matters from Mobutu.³³⁸ On the surface, then, it appears that the meeting was intended, in some way, to further the peace process in Angola by enlisting the support, or at least the non-interference, of Angola's important neighbor, Zaire.

Had Spínola's and especially Mobutu's ensuing actions been more open and less suspicious-looking, the official statement issued after their meeting on Sal might have sufficed to quell what turned into an avalanche of theoretical speculations about the "hidden," and thus real, purpose of the meeting. According to MacQueen, the communiqué "stated merely that the 'presidents of the Republic of Zaire and of Portugal met on the island of Sal for an exchange of views. Among other things discussed were problems related to the decolonization process underway in the Portuguese African territories.'"³³⁹ Yet, only a week after his meeting with Mobutu on Sal, Spínola called a

³³⁸ Spínola, as cited in MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 168. If Mobutu did promise not to interfere in Angola, as Spínola alleged, it was a short-lived pledge, as, among other things, Zaire became the transshipment point for American military equipment provided to the FNLA starting in late July 1975. Mobutu also provided units of his own army to augment the FNLA, in the spring of 1975, and later in the early fall of 1975. They eventually proved as ineffective as the FNLA itself in the face of Cuban advisers and trainers, and later combatants, and Soviet equipment.

³³⁹ Ibid., note 37, 199. MacQueen's source is the Lisbon newspaper, *Diário de Notícias*, September 16, 1974. Interestingly, like his meeting with President Nixon in June, Spínola reportedly met alone with Mobutu, with only a Zairian interpreter present, despite the sizeable contingents each brought with him.

group of “third forces” (forças vivas) to a meeting in Lisbon, apparently to discuss their participation in any Angolan provisional government that might eventually be formed. As reported by then *Pravda* journalist, Oleg Ignatyev, the published list of the attendees (twenty-three in all) included those most intent on subverting “the process of genuine decolonization.”³⁴⁰

According to MacQueen, however, the most reactionary white political movements were not invited. No doubt, Spínola believed their objective – the “Rhodesian temptation,” as Admiral Coutinho put it – threatened his neocolonial plans and their non-participation is, therefore, not surprising.³⁴¹ Notably, and also not surprisingly, representatives of the liberation groups were not invited, including the Democratic Movement of Angola (MDA), an organization Ignatyev described as the political wing of the MPLA: “The MDA had been established to publicize and explain the aims and tasks of the MPLA...It has branches in all the towns of the country and unites tens of thousands of people.”³⁴² Ignatyev tells us that when Admiral Coutinho was informed of

Ibid., 167. Also of interest, Admiral Coutinho, the top Portuguese representative in Angola, was only apprised of the Sal meeting in its aftermath.

³⁴⁰ Oleg Ignatyev, “Angola on the Threshold of Change,” *New Times* (Moscow), no. 46 (November 1974): 15.

³⁴¹ MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 169, 171.

³⁴² Ignatyev, “Angola on the Threshold of Change,” 14. Also reported in Oleg Ignatyev, *Secret Weapon in Africa*, trans. David Fidler (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 97, 103. MacQueen confirms Ignatyev’s assertion that representatives of the three NLMs were not invited but adds that the settler representation did not include liberal white groups either. Again, this is not particularly surprising since the

this meeting, after the fact like the meeting on Sal, he remarked, “The representatives of the organizations invited for talks can hardly be described as people expressing the aspirations and opinions of the Angolans.”³⁴³

This secretive, selective conclave in Lisbon, following closely on the heels of the Mobutu-Spinola talks in Sal, and especially considering the political leanings of those groups in attendance, many of which had connections with Zaire, began the liturgy of conjecture that continues to surround the Sal meeting.³⁴⁴

The Hidden Agenda of the Sal Meeting

Speculations on the purpose of the Mobutu-Spinola meeting on Sal generally center on a narrative in which the two heads of state agreed to exclude, or at least marginalize, the Neto faction of the MPLA. To accomplish this, they would only recognize the MPLA’s splinter Chipenda faction, with Holden Roberto as the ostensible leader of a united FNLA-MPLA-(Chipenda)-UNITA alliance. Spinola, at least, apparently believed this triad grouping would be more amenable to permitting white settler political participation (his hoped for pro-Portuguese “Third Force”) in a transitional Angolan government. Most historians who have studied and written about the Portuguese decolonization process agree on at least this aspect of the purposes of the Sal meeting.

liberal white groups generally supported the liberation movements’ agendas, especially the MPLA. MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 169.

³⁴³ Ignatyev, “Angola on the Threshold of Change,” 15.

³⁴⁴ MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 169.

After this consensus, however, the accounts differ in the details they provide on the meeting itself and the resultant actions.

From the left of the political spectrum, Soviet journalist Oleg Ignatyev argues that the purpose of Sal was to “turn Angola over to the FNLA.” He cites as his evidence a book published in Lisbon in 1975, a newspaper article in *Diario de Luanda* on 21 October 1974, and an unidentified article in the French newspaper, *Le Monde*.³⁴⁵ The latter source claimed that Spínola had discussed his decolonization plans with President Nixon in June 1974 on Lajes, where Nixon had stopped over following a Middle Eastern trip. It noted, in part, “In the opinion of the present leaders in Lisbon his secret talks with Nixon and President Mobutu were designed to ‘slow down’ decolonisation and chiefly to ‘marginalise’ Dr. Agostinho Neto’s socialist-oriented MPLA.”³⁴⁶

Also from the left, Michael Wolfers and Jane Bergerol’s reflections on the Sal meeting, which they say also included Jonas Savimbi and Daniel Chipenda as invitees, provides the following assessment. The staunch anti-Communists Spínola and Mobutu viewed Roberto, Chipenda, and Savimbi as pliable (unlike the allegedly stubborn MPLA leader, Agostinho Neto), and believed they could be convinced to form a governing coalition with the white settlers of Angola. Abetted by the withdrawal of Portuguese troops from northern Angolan, FNLA combatants and weaponry, supported by the

³⁴⁵ The book Ignatyev refers to is *Angola - Dramatic Hour of Decolonisation* by Barciela Santos.

³⁴⁶ Ignatyev, *Secret Weapon in Africa*, 104-106.

Zairian army, would move into northern Angola. At the same time, the Portuguese army would hand over its weapons to Jonas Savimbi, operating in the central highlands of Angola, to enhance the military capabilities of UNITA. Finally, officers and civil servants loyal to Spínola would be appointed to key administrative posts in Angola, especially in the MPLA's stronghold of Luanda.

These actions would greatly enhance the military power of both the FNLA and UNITA, while diluting the strength of both Admiral Coutinho and his favored MPLA in the capital and other cities. The net effect would be at least a severe weakening of the MPLA's ability to defend itself in the event of a joint FNLA-UNITA military operation against the movement and a lessening of its ability to use its urban-centered power base to advance its political agenda.³⁴⁷

Historian Fernando Andresen Guimaraes' analysis of the Sal meeting generally supports the Wolfers-Bergerol thesis. He does differ somewhat in his account, however, by noting that besides Holden Roberto, Savimbi and Chipenda, Mario de Andrade, the leader of the small, third MPLA faction, was also present at the meeting.³⁴⁸

Charles K. Ebinger and John Marcum also support the theory that the Sal meeting was designed to eliminate the Neto faction as a political actor in Angola. Ebinger maintains

³⁴⁷ Michael Wolfers and Jane Bergerol, *Angola in the Frontline* (London: Zed Press, 1983), 6.

³⁴⁸ Fernando Andresen Guimaraes, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 93.

that Spínola and Mobutu agreed to recognize only the Chipenda and Andrade factions as legitimate representatives of the MPLA, and Mobutu agreed to permit the two factions to establish headquarters in Kinshasa.³⁴⁹ Additionally, according to Marcum, the agreed-upon plan included the establishment of a twelve-member transitional government in Angola consisting of two members from each of the three liberation movements, with Chipenda and Andrade as the MPLA representatives, and six other members representing non-nationalist Africans and the white settlers.³⁵⁰

Norrie MacQueen's assessment of the significance of the Sal meeting takes a more globalist, Cold War approach. In her scenario, Spínola decided to form an alliance with the American-supported Mobutu, who also enjoyed close relations with the People's Republic of China since his visit to that nation in 1973, as a counter to what the Portuguese president saw as Soviet intrusion into Angolan affairs via the MPLA. "This process of 'internationalization' might, in Spínola's view, be the most effective obstacle to the transfer of power to pro-Soviet Marxists which had already taken place in both Guine and Mozambique. The Sal talks may therefore have had more to do with high diplomacy than low conspiracy."³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ Charles K. Ebinger, "External Intervention in Internal War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Angolan Civil War, *Orbis* 20, no. 3 (Fall 1976): 686-687.

³⁵⁰ John A. Marcum, *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare*, 251.

³⁵¹ MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 168.

The FNLA Makes the First Move

Lending credence to the speculative accounts briefly discussed above that Spínola and Mobutu had “cut a deal” over Angola’s future, in early October (just after Spínola’s forced resignation), Mobutu hosted a meeting aboard the presidential yacht, *SS Mobutu*, anchored in Kinshasa. According to African journalist Godwin Matatu, neither the Neto MPLA faction nor UNITA were invited.³⁵² Besides Mobutu, the meeting did, however, include Holden Roberto and Daniel Chipenda, as well as the Portuguese representative, Spínola’s old friend and former Minister of Defense, Firmino Miguel.³⁵³

Again, little is known of the details of this secretive meeting, but within a week, the FNLA and Portuguese government had declared a formal ceasefire.³⁵⁴ Matatu, citing unidentified sources, linked the October truce to the Sal meeting, noting that it was “the direct result of a secret meeting held in September on the Cape Verde Islands between

³⁵² Matatu, “Angola: When the Guns Begin to Flower,” 44, 45.

³⁵³ MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 174. There is some debate over just who represented the Portuguese government at the Kinshasa talks. Matatu reported that General Fontes Pereira de Melo, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Portuguese Armed Forces, was present, but made no mention of Firmino Miguel, who had resigned his defense minister position after Spínola’s resignation in late September. Matatu, “Angola: When the Guns Begin to Flower,” 44. MacQueen noted that despite Miguel’s resignation, “his range of contacts in Zaire was too valuable to permit his complete removal from the decolonization process.” MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 200 (footnote 64).

³⁵⁴ Following the FNLA-Portuguese ceasefire, both the MPLA and UNITA formalized their de facto ceasefire arrangements – the Popular Movement in late October inside Angola, and UNITA in early November, also inside Angola. Only the FNLA’s ceasefire, then, was formalized outside of the Angolan boundaries.

General Spínola, while he was President of Portugal, and President Mobutu and Holden Roberto.”³⁵⁵

Sometime just before or immediately following the October meeting and the ceasefire announcement, the FNLA reportedly began moving some 4,000 - 5,000 of its trained combatants into northeastern Angola, giving some credence to the Wolfers-Bergerol theory on the plan decided upon by Spínola and Mobutu at Sal, that is, the Portuguese colonial army would permit the FNLA to move freely into northern Angola.³⁵⁶ Matatu reported that sources told him that Holden Roberto had ordered this movement into northern Angola as a security measure in support of impending political activities inside the country. The same unidentified sources, however, also told him that the troop movement was part of a strategy “to strengthen Roberto’s claims to the leadership of a provisional government,” and “Holden’s Army is his political ace, and he will not hesitate to play it.”³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Matatu, “Angola: When the Guns Begin to Flower,” 45.

³⁵⁶ Besides the reporting of Matatu on the movement of the FNLA into northern Angola in October 1974, either just before the declaration of the ceasefire or immediately following its announcement, Thomas A. Johnson of the *New York Times* also reported this action. Thomas A. Johnson, “Angola Potential is Termed Great,” *New York Times*, October 23, 1974, 9, and “One Rebel Group Gains in Angola,” *New York Times*, November 24, 1974, 7.

³⁵⁷ Matatu, “Angola: When the Guns Begin to Flower,” 45. At the time of the October ceasefire and continuing well into 1975, analysts and observers of the Angolan crisis and civil war agree that the FNLA was the largest and strongest of the military forces of the three liberation movements. Despite this general assessment, there has been little consensus on the actual numbers of men under arms for each. Roberto, Neto and Savimbi were never very forthcoming on the size of their respective armies. Thus, the actual strength of each remained a highly debatable subject among not only the Portuguese, but also most other observers of the Angolan situation. Generally speaking, it appears all three movement leaders highly

The Road to Alvor

Spinola's resignation, and the MFA's simultaneous dismissal of his key supporters from the JSN, spelled the end for the general's intricate, and furtive, neocolonial plan, although as noted by MacQueen, his project, including the buildup of *forças vivas* and a lengthy transitional period, was never "explicitly forsworn" by the new government, now led by President da Costa Gomes.³⁵⁸ General Spinola's departure provided the opportunity for the MFA leadership and the provisional government to revise its timetable for Angolan independence, compressing what in August had originally been a lengthy three-year process into a much shorter one of only ten months.

Still, in the fall of 1974 following Spinola's departure, Lisbon was unable to determine with which faction, or factions, of the MPLA to negotiate and how to deal with the still divided liberation movements. As a result, the Portuguese government deferred

exaggerated the size of their military components, no doubt to convince the Portuguese as well as the rival movements that they were more powerful than they actually were. At the time of the FNLA-Portuguese ceasefire in October 1974, Roberto and his leading political and military commanders claimed 30,000 trained and armed men, while Portuguese intelligence estimated the FNLA's operational strength as no more than 10,000, which still made it the largest and most potent army, at least on paper. Johnson, "One Rebel Group Gains in Angola," 7. At the same time, sources within the MPLA, according to Johnson, put the divided Popular Movement's total combatants at 10,000, with an additional 8,000 – 10,000 in training. However, the Portuguese insisted that the MPLA's total forces numbered no more than 3,500. Johnson, "Angola Rebels Refuse to Form A Joint Front for Truce Talks," 12. UNITA, while claiming a little over 3,000 men, numbered no more than 500, according to Portuguese military sources. Johnson, "one Rebel Group Gains in Angola," 7. From the time of the Portuguese coup in April 1974, however, each movement was recruiting heavily in its traditional ethnic homelands. By the time of the Alvor Accord in mid-January 1975, each movement's forces were estimated by Portuguese military authorities as: FNLA – 21, 750; MPLA – 5,500; MPLA/Chipenda (who was expelled from the MPLA and officially joined with Roberto's FNLA in March 1975) – 2,750; UNITA – 3,000. Marcum, *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare*, 257.

³⁵⁸ MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 170.

to the efforts of several African nations, under the auspices of the OAU, in resolving the two issues. In regard to the first problem, however, it was the MPLA itself that was ultimately responsible for settling its own internal divisiveness. In early September 1974, just a few days prior to the Spínola-Mobutu meeting in Sal, the three factions – Neto's "presidential rump," Chipenda's "Eastern Revolt," and Mario de Andrade's small, but vocal, "Active Revolt" – met in the Congo (Brazzaville), a long-time MPLA supporter, for a unity conference. The three agreed on an arrangement that would leave Neto as the president and Chipenda and Joaquim Pinto de Andrade, the brother of Mario de Andrade, as co-vice presidents.

The agreement broke down almost immediately as Chipenda reasserted his claims to the presidency. Still, Neto's historical power within the top echelons of the MPLA organization, based largely on his credentials as the long-time leader and his Mbundu ethnic roots, finally emerged as the determining factor in the power struggle. Thereafter, Chipenda's star within the MPLA constellation quickly faded, a situation he clearly recognized. In October, at the invitation of President Mobutu, he set up offices in Kinshasa. At one time a serious contender for the MPLA leadership, at the end of November, he was officially expelled from the movement. He and his sizeable contingent of veteran guerrilla fighters then entered into a loose alliance with Holden Roberto's FNLA. As a measure of his decreased status, the Portuguese government

refused to recognize his contingent as a legitimate party to the Alvor talks and agreement, even though Chipenda and his followers were not officially accepted into the FNLA until March 1975.

Chipenda's ouster and subsequent defection proved only a temporary setback for the MPLA. At a party conference in October, convened in eastern Angola, the movement reorganized, an action that strengthened both its internal solidarity and Neto's leadership. As remarked by Norrie MacQueen, "The new-found unity immeasurably increased the movement's political effectiveness and it began a rapid process of recovery and consolidation."³⁵⁹ The enhanced status of Admiral Coutinho in Luanda also proved a boon to the MPLA's resurgence. In late November, the MFA had dissolved the ruling Angolan junta, citing obstructionism and ineffectiveness, and appointed the admiral as the high commissioner, greatly increasing his powers and ability to support his preferred MPLA.

The second issue – that of the problem of a still-divided triad of national liberation fronts - was never adequately resolved. It was only temporarily painted over through a series of bilateral understandings engineered by both Portugal and the OAU, beginning in late November 1974 with an FNLA-UNITA agreement brokered by Portuguese Foreign

³⁵⁹ MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 172-173.

Minister Mario Soares in Kinshasa. Thereafter, Admiral Coutinho mediated an MPLA-UNITA agreement, reached on December 18 in Luso, Angola.

The most difficult accord was obviously that between the FNLA and MPLA. Prior to the conclusion of a bilateral agreement between the two in early January 1975, as discussed below, their mutual hostility surfaced frequently and violently, undermining a speedy conclusion to the issue.

In early November, following the conclusion of individual ceasefires with the Portuguese, all three movements opened offices in Luanda. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, violence between supporters of the Popular Movement and National Front soon followed, with UNITA, the weakest of the three militarily, generally maintaining a neutral posture in an effort to remain above the fray. As the violence continued into December, Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta, acting on behalf of the OAU, was able to convince all three leaders to meet with him in Mombasa. Kenyatta's preeminent position as a leading African statesman and his considerable powers of persuasion had the desired effect.

On 4 January 1975, the FNLA and MPLA finally reached an agreement on forming a united front in negotiations with Portugal, completing the series of bilateral agreements begun in late November. The next day, the three movements agreed upon a series of steps within a transitional government arrangement that would quickly lead to Angolan

independence. This understanding provided the basis for the ensuing independence negotiations in Alvor, Portugal, which took place from 10-15 January. As reported, “The three Angolan guerrilla movements signed a joint political agreement...paving the way for immediate talks with Lisbon and independence for Portugal’s last African territory, possibly within a year. In Lisbon, government sources welcomed the agreement and suggested the talks start as early as next Friday in Portugal.”³⁶⁰

The Independence Agreement

The Alvor accords became effective on January 31, 1975. The agreement created a tri-partite transitional government to be headed by a Portuguese High Commissioner and a three-member Presidential Committee composed of one representative from each of the three movements. Among other requirements, the accords called for the establishment of a National Defense Committee to oversee the gradual integration of the military forces of the three movements and the Portuguese colonial army, with a final composition of 8,000 combatants each from the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA, and 24,000 from the Portuguese. The latter were to conduct a phased withdrawal from the country between the October 31 scheduled general elections for a constituent assembly and February 1976. Independence Day was set as 11 November.

³⁶⁰ “Divided Angolan Guerrillas Sign Accord,” *New York Times*, January 6, 1975, 3.

Interestingly, Article 7 stated that after the general ceasefire, formalized by the agreement, “the armed forces of the FNLA, the MPLA and the UNITA shall take up positions in the regions and places where they are at present stationed.”³⁶¹ This meant, among other things, that the movement of several thousand of Holden Roberto’s forces into northern Angola in the fall of 1974, perhaps spurred by the agreements secretly arranged on Sal Island in September and in Kinshasa in October, became a *fait accompli*. Thus, even as the ink was drying on the Alvor document, Roberto found himself and his army in a strong position to move against the capital in force, should he so decide. At the least, the mere presence of substantial numbers of FNLA combatants to the north of Luanda represented a highly intimidating situation to the resurgent but still militarily weakened MPLA, whose main support came from the capital region and its environs.

Defects in the Agreement

The Alvor accord was well structured *on paper* (author’s emphasis) to effect a peaceful road to Angolan sovereignty, but it was based on false premises. First, it assumed that the Portuguese government, racked by political and economic crises, possessed both the resources and will power to oversee its successful implementation, including the use of force as necessary. From Lisbon, American Ambassador Carlucci’s reporting to the State Department following the January agreement was right on the mark

³⁶¹ CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, Portuguese Ministry of Mass Communication, “Angola: The Independence Agreement,” 3.

in identifying this key weakness. In March 1975, for example, when violence between the MPLA and FNLA escalated, he noted that the Portuguese government's reaction "demonstrates how Portugal neither has the will nor the capability of major military intervention to save the precarious peace in Angola. Because of serious political instability at home, current developments in Portugal's ex-colonies are not GOP's major subject of attention."³⁶²

The specious assumption was magnified on the ground in Angola where the colonial army had dissolved into a dispirited and increasingly undisciplined and impotent force.³⁶³ It was incapable, if not disinterested in, integrating the armed forces of the three movements into its own ranks, as stipulated in the Alvor accord. Further, it was also charged with overseeing the demobilization of those forces that exceeded the authorized 8,000, and evacuating them. Given the estimated numbers of combatants belonging to

³⁶² American Embassy Lisbon Telegram, "Subject: GOP and Angolan Future," 281227Z March 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser-Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Portugal – State Department Telegrams to SecState – EXDIS (I), Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library. "GOP" is the State Department's abbreviation for "Government of Portugal."

³⁶³ Ambassador Carlucci is again instructive, observing, "Even in the improbable event that GOP decided to risk troops in major action for sake of civil order in Africa, it may reasonably be assumed that Portuguese troops would not obey the order. Indiscipline is a serious and mounting problem in the Portuguese army and past experience in Guinea-Bissau has indicated that once the decision to free a colony has been taken, troops will not risk their necks for the sake of law and order. In many cases, this assumption may even extend to protection of Angolan Whites." Ibid., p. 2. The ambassador also reported that Lisbon, in response to the violence, had issued a "defensive" communiqué addressing allegations by the MPLA that the army had remained "passive in crucial situations." Ibid.

each of the three liberation movements, this requirement probably only applied to the FNLA, but the colonial army failed, too, in this responsibility.³⁶⁴

Secondly, unlike the independence negotiations with FRELIMO and the PAIGC, both notable for their controlled protocol and disciplined secrecy, the Angolan talks, from the time of Savimbi's de facto ceasefire in June 1974, were disorderly and unconstrained by diplomatic niceties. The leaders of each movement, especially the FNLA and MPLA, frequently voiced their self-serving ideas about how the Portuguese should go about the decolonization process. Just as frequently, they aired their opinions on their own importance to that process and threatened to undermine it if their personal conditions were not met. On 8 October, for example, Daniel Chipenda and Holden Roberto warned Admiral Coutinho and the Angolan ruling junta that they would resume fighting if Lisbon recognized only the Neto-led MPLA. In late November, Agostinho Neto made it known publicly that his movement would not participate in any coalition government unless the MPLA was allocated 60-70 percent of the governmental positions.³⁶⁵

The atmosphere created by the constant recriminations, accusations and threats was not conducive, indeed was extremely counterproductive, to the cooperation needed to

³⁶⁴ As previously noted, John Marcum, citing Portuguese military authorities, estimated the size of each movement's armed forces as: FNLA – 21, 750; MPLA – 5,500; MPLA/Chipenda faction (soon to join the FNLA) – 2,750; UNITA – 3,000. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II, 257.

³⁶⁵ "Angola: Violence in Luanda," November 23, 1974, *World News Digest: Facts on File* [Database online]; available on <http://www.2facts.com>.

negotiate and carry out the Alvor agreement. Eventually, in early 1975, as we shall see in Chapter 7, the liberation movements translated their antagonistic words into belligerent actions.

Thirdly, Portugal assumed that, again like the negotiations with Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, there would be minimal, if any, outside interference in the decolonization process. They also expected that the international community, especially the United States and the Soviet Union, would encourage and back its efforts to peacefully resolve the Angolan independence issue. Indeed, for at least the first five months after Alvor, the Soviet Union very vocally supported the independence process, including the representation of all three movements in the transitional government. As Arthur Jay Klinghoffer has noted in his study of Soviet involvement in the Angolan civil war, the Kremlin “recognized the MPLA as the leading force in the national liberation movement but it wanted to avoid bloodshed and therefore supported the sharing of power worked out at Alvor. It always called for unity between the three movements and for Portuguese cooperation with the Transitional Government.”³⁶⁶ The author cites various Soviet

³⁶⁶ Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War: A Study in Soviet Policy in the Third World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), 17. Interestingly, the Soviet Union was not alone in recognizing the prominence of the MPLA. John Stockwell, who headed the CIA’s task force on Angola, asserts that the American Consul General in Luanda, Tom Killoran, “believed the MPLA was best qualified to run Angola and that its leaders sincerely wanted a peaceful relationship with the United States. Swish [Killoran] had worked with all three movements and found the MPLA better organized and easier for him to see. John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 63-64. Robert Hultslander, the CIA station chief in Luanda from July 1975 until the station’s closure, along with the American embassy, in November 1975, confirms Stockwell’s assessment

media reports as evidence of the Kremlin's support for the coalition government, including *Pravda* and *Radio Moscow in French to Africa*.

To confirm Klinghoffer's assessment, I reviewed various 1975 issues of *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*. I found ample evidence of Soviet public support for the Alvor accords, as well as for the 21 June 1975 Nakuru agreement, an eleventh-hour OAU attempt to reconcile the three nationalists movements along the same lines as the Alvor agreement. Fyodor Tarasov, writing for *Pravda* in April 1975, for example, referred to all three liberation groups as "champions of independence," and lauded their efforts "to overcome the crisis thrust upon them."³⁶⁷

In contrast, as I will explain in the following chapters, especially Chapter 7, Henry Kissinger was bleakly pessimistic about the prospects for a peaceful road to Angolan independence. More importantly, as previously mentioned, only one week after the signing of the Alvor Accords, the Forty Committee, chaired by Kissinger in his role as

of Killoran's high regard (and his own for that matter) for the MPLA. "I came to share [U.S. embassy Consul General Tom] Killoran's assessment that the MPLA was the best qualified movement to govern Angola...Despite the uncontested communist background of many of the MPLA's leaders, they were more effective, better educated, better trained and better motivated. The rank and file also were better motivated...Portuguese Angolans overwhelmingly supported the MPLA. Unfortunately, the CIA's association with the FNLA and UNITA tainted its analysis...No one wanted to believe the Consulate's reporting, and Killoran's courageous and accurate analysis was ignored." Robert W. Hultslander, "Interview with Robert W. Hultslander, Former CIA Station Chief in Luanda, Angola," interview by Piero Gleijeses, correspondence, 1998 [Database on-line]; available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv>.

³⁶⁷ Fyodor Tarasov, "The Colonialist Won't Quit," *Pravda*, April 24, 1975, 5. Along these same lines, see S. Kulik, "Angola's Decolonization is Threatened," *Pravda*, June 12, 1975, 5, and V. Lashkul, "The Goal is Decolonization," *Izvestia*, June 24, 1975, 3. On Soviet support for the efforts of the three liberations movements to come together at Nakuru, see Victor Sidenko, "The Nakuru Agreement," *New Times* (Moscow), no. 26 (June 1975): 16.

National Security Adviser, authorized \$300,000 in “politically earmarked” funding for Holden Roberto. Various Ford Administration spokespersons often described the amount as “small” or “paltry” and of no consequence. This was simply not true.

As I discuss in detail in Chapter 7, shortly after the January allocation, an emboldened Holden Roberto moved quickly and violently to answer the question as to who would govern an independent Angola. Up to this point, as former CIA Angolan Task Force director John Stockwell tells us, both the MPLA and UNITA had acted in good faith in their observance of the Alvor agreement. After the FNLA’s bold attacks against the MPLA, Stockwell somewhat pessimistically opined, “The fate of Angola was then sealed in blood. The issue could only be decided by violence.”³⁶⁸

Conclusion

Unlike the decolonization processes in both Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, which were both reasonably quick and smooth, Angola’s path to independence was marked by considerable uncertainties, animosity and the politics of favoritism. As I have explained, the colony became a victim of Portugal’s own internal political factionalism. Moreover, the Alvor accords’ major assumptions, especially Lisbon’s belief that, like its other African colonies, Angola’s decolonization would take place without external interference, were seriously flawed.

³⁶⁸ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 68.

Because of Angola's internal circumstances, most notably the inter-liberation movement struggle for supremacy, its transition period from colony to sovereign nation was especially vulnerable to the hegemonic designs and fears of its southern African neighbors, particularly those of Zaire and the Republic of South Africa. In the following chapters, especially Chapter 6, I will discuss both the high-level of interest and involvement in Angola of both of these nations on behalf of their chosen clients.³⁶⁹ Their actions contributed to the rapidly escalating violence and helped to undermine Portugal's efforts, however feeble, to carry out the provisions of the independence agreement and to avoid a violent path to sovereignty.

³⁶⁹ Angola's independence presented a much different scenario to the Republic of South Africa (RSA) than that of Mozambique, which was especially dependent on South Africa for its economic livelihood. Perhaps one could better describe their relationship as interdependence. The Republic depended on Mozambique for 25 percent of its mining labor force and relied upon its railroads, which connected South Africa to the ports of Maputo and Beira in Mozambique, to alleviate the congestion in the RSA's own seaports. Maxwell, "The Legacy of Decolonization," 18, and "Portugal, Africa and the Future," *Africa*, no. 35 (July 1974): 13. The two neighbors were thus enmeshed in a symbiotic relationship, although post-colonial Mozambique's harsh public criticism of the Republic and its apartheid policies belied the closeness of their mutually beneficial dependency. Even governance by a left-leaning FRELIMO could not alter this reality. As noted by Kenneth Maxwell, "An independent Mozambique, even if ruled by a Marxist government, would be extremely vulnerable to South Africa and economically dependent on the goodwill of Pretoria." Maxwell, "The Legacy of Decolonization," 18. The FRELIMO government, unlike an MPLA one in Angola, did not constitute a viable threat to the South African republic considering the substantial overt economic and subtle political linkages between Pretoria and Maputo. Mark Chona, a close adviser to President Kaunda of Zambia, perhaps best expressed this latter linkage. In late 1975, he told the American ambassador in Lusaka, Zambia, that Mozambique's Foreign Minister Chissano could afford to take a public stance against the Republic of South Africa "because of private understandings it has with SAG." Chissano admitted, "...that Mozambique virtually has diplomatic relations with SAG and wanted to continue this close relationship for economic and political reasons." American Embassy Lusaka Telegram 2491, 221259Z December 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser - President Country Files for Africa, Zambia - State Department Telegrams to SecState - NODIS (1), Box 8, Gerald R. Ford Library. SAG refers to the South African Government.

Given these Angolan and regional realities, the unfolding, chaotic situation in Angola was also rife with the potential for super-power involvement. This potential was eventually realized, with both American and Soviet intervention. However, as we shall see in the following chapters, the timing and nature of those interventions are still subjects of considerable debate.

The Ford Administration admitted to American involvement in the Angolan storm, but only after the American media began to sniff out the details in the fall of 1975. Its official account alleges that the United States decided to act only after massive Soviet military support for the MPLA in early 1975. As a result of this assistance, administration spokespersons contended that the Popular Movement initiated a military confrontation with the FNLA in an attempt to weaken, if not destroy, its major military and political opponent and in the process undermined the Alvor accord. I will provide a detailed discussion of the official story of American involvement in Angola, as told by the president and his top foreign policy officials, in Chapter 5. In Chapters 6 and 7, I will analyze their narrative to determine its accuracy and truthfulness.

In what was to become Portugal's own "decent interval," from the early spring of 1975 onward, the situation in Angola would spiral out of control as inter-movement violence escalated, fueled by an increasing involvement by outside powers, both regional

and international.³⁷⁰ The Alvor agreement set the Angolan decolonization process in motion, but, as Godwin Matatu prophesized, it would prove to be “laden with many problems.”

³⁷⁰ I do not exaggerate when I use the term “decent interval” to describe Lisbon’s desire to depart Angola as quickly and painlessly as possible. Ambassador Carlucci, for example, noted “In GOP view both public and private, January 1975 Alvor Accord outlining framework for Angolan future marked clearcut break in Portugal’s responsibility and obligations in ex-colony.” American Embassy Lisbon Telegram, “Subject: GOP and Angolan Future,” 281227Z March 1975, p. 1. Further, in the “Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy Toward Angola,” the authoring Interdepartmental Group’s consensus was, “The major Portuguese Government objective in Angola is to get out – with honor if possible, but in any case to get out.” National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa, “Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy Toward Angola,” June 13, 1975, p. 20 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive.

CHAPTER 5 AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA: THE OFFICIAL MYTHOLOGY

“Let there be no mistake about it – the culprits in the tragedy that is now unfolding in Angola are the Soviet Union and its client state, Cuba.”

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger³⁷¹

On January 15, 1975, representatives of the Portuguese government and Angola’s three liberation movements, meeting in southern Portugal, agreed to a cooperative road to independence. The Alvor accords, as the agreement came to be known, stipulated that a coalition, quad-partite government would oversee a series of delineated responsibilities and duties required to bring about elections by October 31 and full independence on November 11. The hoped-for peaceful decolonization process broke down almost immediately. The long-standing animosities among the three liberation groups, especially those between the MPLA and FNLA, rapidly escalated into military violence, beginning shortly after the transitional government took power on January 31. Over the next ten months, the battle for Angola would pit Agostinho Neto’s MPLA against a loosely forged union between Holden Roberto’s FNLA and Jonas Savimbi’s UNITA.

External intervention fueled the fratricidal conflict. By late July, as the struggle grew into an all-out civil war, no fewer than four extra-continental nations – the United States,

³⁷¹ Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *U.S. Involvement in Civil War in Angola: Hearing before the Subcommittee on African Affairs*, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., January 29, 1976, 8. Hereafter referred to as *Angola*.

the Soviet Union, Cuba, and China – not to mention regional actors, were involved in the Angolan conflict on one side or the other. Their actions brought the Cold War to sub-Saharan Africa for the first time since the Congo Crisis of the early 1960s.

The Ford Administration claimed that it was the Soviet Union, supported by its Cuban proxies, which intervened first, on behalf of its long-time client, the MPLA. Official spokesmen contended that the first Soviet arms shipments to the Popular Movement, in the fall of 1974, followed by the arrival of still more Soviet weapons and Cuban advisers the following spring, set off a chain reaction that destroyed the January agreement. As Kissinger testified in late January 1976, it was no coincidence that the MPLA began attacking the other two movements in March 1975 following the arrival of large shipments of Soviet arms. “With this kind of encouragement, the MPLA had little incentive to fulfill the terms of the Alvor accord which would have prevented it from dominating any future coalition government.”³⁷²

This chapter presents the Ford Administration’s version of the course of events in Angola that led to the American decision, on July 18, to intervene on behalf of the anti-MPLA coalition. The reader should keep in mind that my recounting of the official narrative is based on what Ford Administration officials have publicly told us about the American intervention in Angola. They revealed their for-the-record account of the

³⁷² Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 9.

American involvement in various forums, including testimony at congressional hearings, press conferences, and in their own memoirs, such as those of President Ford and Henry Kissinger. As we shall see later, however, their account obscured the real nature of the American covert operation and misrepresented the timelines of the intervention. Additionally, to further justify the American action as a response to Soviet-supported aggression, Washington exaggerated the extent of Moscow's support to the MPLA up to President Ford's July decision, while distorting the timelines of the Soviet Union's involvement.

The first part of the discussion deals with what the Ford Administration's foreign policy experts contended was really at stake in Angola. It addresses the first question that I posed in the introduction to this study. Briefly, "Why did the United States become involved in Angola when it had previously ignored Portugal's colonies?" The second part of this chapter takes up the administration's stance on the chronology of foreign intervention, especially that of the United States and the Soviet Union and Cuba. This part of my discussion relates to the second question I posed earlier: "Who did what, and when?"

Senator Clark Weighs in on the Angolan Issue

In November 1975, when funds for the CIA-engineered covert operation in Angola ran out – an amount reported as nearly \$32 million by William Nelson, the CIA's Deputy

Director, in a closed hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in early November – the Ford Administration asked for an additional \$9 million in an emergency supplemental appropriation. The details of the “closed hearing” were quickly leaked to the press.³⁷³ The Tunney Amendment (to the FY76 Defense Appropriations Bill), passed overwhelmingly by both the Senate and the House of Representatives on 19 December 1975 and 27 January 1976, respectively, denied this request by barring additional funding to the pro-Western factions in Angola.

In late November 1975, President Ford requested yet an additional \$28 million, shortly before he and Kissinger embarked on a trip to China and Indonesia. The amount was based upon the recommendations of the CIA’s task force on Angola and the Forty Committee, although Henry Kissinger has written that he believed that at least \$60 million in additional funding was required. President Ford, however, listened to his congressional advisers in the White House and decided upon the lower sum.³⁷⁴ This request prompted Senator Clark’s early 1976 hearings on the American involvement in

³⁷³ See, for example, Leslie H. Gelb, “U.S. Aides Tell Senators of Arms Aid to Angolans,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1975, 3, and Walter Pincus, “CIA Aid in Angola Defended,” *Washington Post*, November 8, 1975, 7.

³⁷⁴ Kissinger *Years of Renewal*, 826.

Angola and led to the passage of his amendment to the Foreign Aid Bill in February 1976.³⁷⁵

In his opening remarks on January 29, the senator raised three issues that he considered critical to determining the full story of American involvement in the Angolan Civil War. First, what was at stake for the United States if the Soviet-backed faction proved victorious in the struggle? Secondly, how accurate was the administration's argument that the United States' involvement was a justifiable reaction to a Soviet initiative designed to militarily install the pro-Soviet MPLA in power, even though it was no more than a minority political movement? Finally, because the administration had requested another \$28 million in funding for the FNLA and UNITA, what would the additional authorization accomplish, given the administration's argument that the Soviet Union had already provided \$200 million to the MPLA, as well as 400 advisers, and the Cubans had sent 11,000 troops?³⁷⁶

In expanding upon the first issue - what was at stake for the United States in Angola - the Senator first opined that it was not unreasonable to question whether the Soviet

³⁷⁵ The effect of the Clark Amendment was to cut off all covert assistance to the anti-MPLA coalition. Unlike the Tunney Amendment, which banned additional funding for the then on-going covert operation via the 1976 Defense Appropriation Bill, Senator Clark's amendment had long-term ramifications – it made the ban permanent until its repeal during the Reagan Administration. For an in-depth discussion of both the Tunney and Clark Amendments, see Robert David Johnson, "The Unintended Consequences of Congressional Reform: The Clark and Tunney Amendments and U.S. Policy toward Angola," *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 2 (April 2003): 215-243.

³⁷⁶ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 1-3.

Union, given its track record in Africa, would gain a permanent foothold in southern Africa if the MPLA won the civil war. To underscore his point, the senator cited the recent case of the downturn in Soviet relations with Mozambique in which the newly independent nation had “denied the Soviet Union base privileges and publicly accused it of pushing too hard, in spite of generous Soviet assistance in Mozambique’s liberation struggle over the last decade.”³⁷⁷ Further, since administration spokesperson, both in previous testimony and public statements, had emphasized that American economic and strategic interests in Angola were not significant and that the Angolan conflict was not ideological, what then was at risk if the American-backed factions were to lose?³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 2.

³⁷⁸ Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, William E. Schaufele, Jr., who appeared before Senator Clark’s hearings on February 6, had previously testified before the House Committee on International Relations on 26 January, just prior to the House vote on the Tunney Amendment. Schaufele remarked that neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union had significant interests in Angola. “The Soviets have even less vital interests at stake in distant Angola than we do and our direct interest there is minimal.” Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, *United States Policy on Angola: Hearing before the Committee on International Relations*, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., January 20, 1976, 6. Additionally, various State Department and CIA estimates prior to President Ford’s 18 July decision to support both the FNLA and UNITA emphasized that the United States had important but not vital interests in Angola. They were largely related to American economic interests, which amounted to \$400 million, of which Gulf Oil’s investment (in the Cabindan enclave) comprised \$300 million. The absence of vital American interests in Angola is discussed in several other documents. See for example, “Talking Points for Secretary Kissinger, National Security Council Meeting on Angola,” June 27, 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser, National Security Council Meeting File, 1974-1977, NSC Meeting, June 27, 1975, Box 2, Gerald R. Ford Library, and “Minutes, Meeting of the National Security Council (To Review Options for United States Policy toward Angola),” June 27, 1975, National Security Adviser, National Security Meeting File, 1974-1977, NSC Meeting, June 27, 1975, Box 2, Gerald R. Ford Library. Although the United States had strategic interests in Angola, derived in part from its location along the sea- and airlines of communication between the U.S. and the Indian Ocean, as late as June 14, 1975, the State Department still termed such interests as “marginal.” “Memorandum for Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, Subject: Issues Paper on Angola,” June 14, 1975, p. 2. From an ideological perspective, administration spokespersons repeatedly asserted that

Elaborating upon the second issue – that the United States was reacting to a Soviet initiative - Senator Clark noted that the administration's argument was questionable since it was then known (due to the leak of the Pike Committee investigation and other leaks to the media) that the Forty Committee had authorized \$300,000 to the FNLA in January 1975, two months before the significant escalation of Soviet arms support in March 1975. The chairman continued, remarking that President Mobutu had been substantially supporting the FNLA for some time and "might well have been increasing his assistance in anticipation of independence as well."³⁷⁹ He finished his discussion of the issue for the time being by commenting, "I conclude that trying to determine who did what first in support of liberation movements in Angola is at least as difficult as answering which came first, the chicken or the egg."³⁸⁰

the United States was not opposed to the Marxist MPLA, per se, noting the American benign acceptance of FRELIMO in Mozambique and the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau. Rather, it was the MPLA's attempt, with the military assistance of the Soviet Union and Cuba, to inflict its dominion over Angola that was the issue. As noted by Schaufele in his January 26 testimony, "I wish to underline what I have said on many occasions, that we are not hostile to the MPLA. Before it decided to try to impose itself on Angola with the aid of Soviet and Cuban bayonets, our diplomatic officers in Luanda maintained good and close relations with leaders of the MPLA." House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, *United States Policy on Angola*, 2. This statement is interesting in that it contrasts with Kissinger's later writings on Angola in which he remarked, incorrectly it would seem, that the United States had no official representation in Angola and, thus, was only occasionally informed about the activities of Angola's three liberation movements. Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 794-795. Also, as Senator Clark pointed out, the PRC and Soviet Union, both Communist nations, found themselves on opposite sides of the fence in the Angolan conflict. Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 2. In sum, from an economic, strategic, or ideological viewpoint, American interests in Angola were not vital, nor even very important.

³⁷⁹ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 3.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

Senator Clark then addressed the final issue concerning the impact of the requested \$28 million. The administration argued the increased assistance was intended to create a local military balance of power, thereby improving the chances that negotiations leading to a coalition government would take place among the three movements. If the administration's estimates were accurate on the amounts of aid and advisers already provided by the Soviet Union and the number of Cuban combatants deployed in Angola, then, as the senator pointed out, "It is unlikely that these levels of assistance can be 'balanced' by another \$9 million in the defense appropriation or the \$28 million more which has been requested, or even another \$50 million or \$100 million. How can more dollars offset troops and technical advisers?"³⁸¹

Despite Senator Clark's suspicions that the administration had not been telling the full truth about American covert involvement in Angola – a skepticism that had reached a full-blown mistrust after his visit to southern Africa during the congressional recess of the previous summer - President Ford and his foreign policy advisers continued to articulate and defend their position on the reason for the American intervention and the events which had compelled the timing and nature of the United States' actions.³⁸²

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Kissinger attributed Senator Clark's mistrust to the changed congressional environment brought about by the 1974 "McGovernite landslide." This new congress, Kissinger wrote, "was violently opposed to intervention abroad, especially in the developing world, ever suspicious of the CIA, deeply hostile to covert operations, and distrustful of the veracity of the executive branch." Kissinger especially singled out the

The Stakes: American Credibility and International Equilibrium

The Ford Administration's basic answer to Senator Clark's question of why the United States involved itself in the Angolan imbroglio always boiled down to the issue of American willingness and determination to respond to what officials alleged was Soviet-provoked aggression. Such American action, they contended, was necessary, first, to send a strong signal to all that the United States would not acquiesce in such behavior. Secondly, a demonstration of American resolve in countering Soviet attempts to gain a geostrategic advantage would promote global stability by foreclosing Soviet attempts to tilt the international balance in its favor. As Kissinger told the senator:

Peace requires a sense of security which depends upon some form of equilibrium. That equilibrium is impossible unless the United States remains both strong and determined to use its strength when required...Our deepest concern is for global stability. If the United States is seen to emasculate itself in the face of massive, unprecedented Soviet and Cuban intervention, what will be the perception of leaders around the world as they make decisions concerning

African Subcommittee's Chairman, Senator Clark, because he had received more briefings on the American operation in Angola than any other senator and had posed no objections. However, once the news media began leaking details of the American involvement, especially starting in early November, Senator Clark "felt at liberty to talk about Angola...as if he had just learned of the Angolan civil war from news accounts." Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 827, 826. The waters of Senator Clark's mistrust ran much deeper than Kissinger's analysis. John Stockwell's account of the senator's African sojourn in August, in which he visited Zaire, Zambia, and Tanzania, speaking to the heads of state in those three nations as well as to all three liberation movement leaders and the South African foreign minister, reveals that at least Mobutu and Roberto (and probably Savimbi also) were coached on what to say to Clark who, they were told, had been briefed in only very general terms about the covert program. Thus sworn to secrecy, Clark was not at liberty to discuss the program, and Mobutu and Roberto were "encouraged to promote their interests in Angola, confident that Senator Clark could not turn the conversation to the CIA program." Stockwell remarked that the senator returned from his trip, skeptical of both the briefings he had received in Washington and of the covert program in Angola. Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 227-229. On the same subject, see also Dick Clark, "Frustration," *New York Times*, January 29, 1976, 32.

their future security...And what conclusion will an unopposed superpower draw when the next opportunity for intervention beckons?³⁸³

Simply stated, if the United States not only talked the talk, but also, and most importantly, walked the walk, it would both deter adversaries from taking actions inimical to American interests and reassure allies and friends of Washington's commitment to their security.

As Robert McMahon has argued, Washington's preoccupation with America's credibility, or at least others' perceptions of that credibility – elevated the notion into a major determinant in its Cold War decision making.³⁸⁴ The fixation on this largely psychological dimension of power, then, was long-lived and obviously predated the Angolan crisis. However, Angola came on the heels of the humiliating dénouement of the American effort in Southeast Asia. As a result of that defeat, both President Ford and Henry Kissinger believed that the nation's credibility, and hence its global clout, had suffered a severe blow.

This perception amplified the administration's sense of urgency, in the case of Angola, to act decisively in what it claimed was a response to Soviet adventurism in an area where Moscow had no traditional interests. A brief overview of the immediate history leading up the American decision to intervene in Angola follows. It highlights

³⁸³ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 6, 7, 8.

³⁸⁴ McMahon, "Credibility and World Power," 457.

the reasons for the administration's preoccupation with restoring American credibility in the wake of Vietnam, and why the White House elevated an essentially tribal conflict in a far-off West African nation to "a matter of urgent concern," as Kissinger termed it.³⁸⁵

Vietnam and American Credibility

In late 1973, when Henry Kissinger mused that since 1969 he and President Nixon had moved international conditions and alignments in a direction favorable to American interests, he could not have possibly foreseen that in a little over a year the satisfactory trends would be shattered by a series of events in Southeast Asia. From the White House perspective, the Communist victory in South Vietnam in the spring of 1975, as well as the victory of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia – the sideshow to the main event next door - represented a monumental international crises de confidence in American resolve, prestige, and competence.

The swift and catastrophic end to the American-supported Phnom Penh and Saigon governments of Lon Nol and Nguyen Van Thieu, respectively, called into question the country's ability to effectively counter what the Ford Administration perceived as Communism on an aggressive march against the free world, beginning first in Southeast Asia as the fallen Cambodian and South Vietnamese dominoes suggested. President Ford recalled those somber days:

³⁸⁵ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 6.

In the wake of our humiliating retreat from Cambodia and South Vietnam in the spring of 1975, our allies around the world began to question our resolve. The British were concerned. So, too, were the French. Our friends in Asia were equally upset. In the Middle East, the Israelis began to wonder whether the U.S. would stand by them in the event of war. As long as I was President, I decided, the U.S. would not abandon its commitments overseas. We would not permit our setbacks to become a license for others to fish in troubled waters. Rhetoric alone, I knew, would not persuade anyone that America would stand firm. They would have to see proof of our resolve.³⁸⁶

The Ford Administration had made a last-ditch effort to try to save the two governments and demonstrate that the United States would honor its commitments. At the end of January 1975, the president requested \$222 million in supplemental military aid for Cambodia, arguing to Congress that it would somehow “facilitate an early negotiated settlement.”³⁸⁷ At the same time, the administration requested an additional \$300 million (later, in early April, the sum was raised to \$722 million) to shore up the Saigon government and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Kissinger and Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger argued that the purpose was to keep both governments from collapsing and to show that American resolve and support for its allies had not weakened. As quoted by Jussi Hanhimäki, Kissinger remarked, “We maintain

³⁸⁶ Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal* (Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), 275.

³⁸⁷ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 638.

that this will hurt our credibility worldwide. Our allies must know that we will stand by them and by any agreements we have with them. It will hurt our international negotiating power, if we do not stand in South Vietnam.”³⁸⁸

President Ford and Vice President Rockefeller both shared Kissinger’s viewpoint on the issue of American credibility and its relationship to the state of the international environment. Rockefeller noted that the aid “is a necessity for our global relationships,” and Ford argued that eventually it would be impossible to effectively continue the triangular diplomatic strategy with the Soviets and Chinese if the United States was seen as backing out of its commitments.³⁸⁹

The American Congress, attempting to reassert its own prerogatives in foreign policy after decades of deferring to the “imperial presidency,” was in no mood to fund continued fighting in Southeast Asia, despite President Ford’s argument that American credibility would significantly suffer if the nation deserted its allies. Isaacson tells us that Kissinger drafted the president’s appeal to Congress, although Ford toned down some of Kissinger’s more belligerent rhetoric while maintaining his words on credibility. “The ‘credibility’ argument that he had used at the beginning of the Nixon administration was the one he stressed at the end. In the message to Congress...this argument was put succinctly: ‘U.S. unwillingness to provide adequate assistance to our allies fighting for

³⁸⁸ Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 388.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

their lives would seriously affect our credibility throughout the world as an ally. And this credibility is essential to our security.’’ Despite President Ford’s petition, Congress rejected the administration’s argument and its request, appropriating funds only to evacuate Americans and a limited number of Cambodians and South Vietnamese.³⁹⁰

Soon after the congressional defeat, in May 1975, Ford and Kissinger were presented with an opportunity to quickly reassert American prowess and credibility in the wake of the Cambodian and South Vietnamese disasters and to demonstrate that America was not a helpless giant, as one West German newspaper labeled the United States.³⁹¹ After the Cambodians seized the American merchantman, S.S. *Mayaguez*, in international waters off their coast, the president and all his men decided that a quick and forceful response was required to rescue the captive mariners. Probably more importantly, as Ford noted, “decisive action would reassure our allies and bluntly warn our adversaries that the U.S. was not a helpless giant.”³⁹²

Within three days, the crew of thirty-nine was rescued and the ship recovered, but in the process, forty-one American Marines were killed and another fifty wounded.³⁹³ The

³⁹⁰ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 642. Isaacson notes that after President Ford’s personal appeal before Congress for more funding, “there was not one clap of applause – from either side of the aisle.” Ibid., 643.

³⁹¹ President Ford wrote that an editorial in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which appeared shortly after the fall of Saigon in April 1975, had carried the headline, “America – A Helpless Giant.” Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 275.

³⁹² Ibid., 282.

³⁹³ Ibid., 284. The total number of Killed- and Wounded-in-Action includes those Marines lost in three helicopter crashes prior to the assault of Koh Tang Island where the Cambodians had anchored the

president and his principal advisers during the “quasi-crisis” – Kissinger, Defense Secretary Schlesinger and Vice President Rockefeller – all viewed the operation as a great success, not only because the United States had rescued the crew, but also because of its symbolic significance. President Ford, according to Kissinger biographer, Walter Isaacson, saw the *Mayaguez* “victory” as not only worthwhile, but as his most important foreign policy decision, having remarked, “*Mayaguez* provided us with a shot in the arm as a nation when we really needed it. It convinced some of our adversaries we were not a paper tiger.”³⁹⁴ Congress also largely praised the president’s decisive actions, and the public, suffering from the first symptoms of the Vietnam malaise, rewarded the president with high marks in the opinion polls – a boost to Ford’s personal credibility.³⁹⁵

Mayaguez after her capture. By the time of the assault, the crew had been removed, but they were subsequently spotted and rescued by the U.S.S. *Wilson*, a Navy destroyer.

³⁹⁴ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 651. The rescue of the crew, despite the high number of casualties, not only perked up the president’s popularity with the public, but also, according to Ford, restored Americans’ faith in their country. Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 284.

³⁹⁵ President Ford’s linking of the perceived foreign policy success of the *Mayaguez* operation to his presidential popularity reveals yet another dynamic of the credibility phenomenon – the domestic dimension. Thomas Noer discusses this aspect of credibility in his article, “International Credibility and Political Survival: The Ford Administration’s Intervention in Angola,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, XXIII, no. 4 (Fall 1993): passim. He argues that Ford believed he needed to have a foreign policy victory to enhance his political prestige at home, thereby increasing his chances for re-gaining the presidency in the November 1976 election. Kissinger needed a foreign policy “win” to keep Ford in the White House so that he could continue his role as the leading American foreign policy architect. Journalist Anthony Lewis also discussed the link between presidential popularity and the public’s perception of his toughness in the global arena, specifically linking it to Angola. Lewis argued that President Ford and Kissinger could use their decisions and actions in the Angolan conflict to demonstrate that they were not soft on Communism and to lay the blame for the Soviet-supported MPLA victory squarely at the feet of the Democratic Congress. Moreover, they could use the same argument to rebut Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan’s similar criticism. “‘Who lost Angola?’ There is a good campaign cry. Mr. Ford came close to it when he denounced Congress last week for barring covert intervention in Angola. ‘They’ve lost their guts,’ he said.

Washington identified the issue of American credibility as a vital national interest. Thus, in justifying its intervention in Angola, the Ford Administration contended that it was the United States' "historic responsibility" as the leader of the free world, to act to preserve the global balance when the actions of others threatened that equilibrium. Moreover, if the United States failed to act, decisively and resolutely, the nation would be sending the wrong signal because, as Kissinger observed, "A challenge not met today will tempt far more dangerous crises tomorrow."³⁹⁶

Angola and American Credibility

Unlike the *Mayaguez* incident, the building crisis in Angola involved the Soviet Union and raised the stakes to a much higher level. The administration's point man on the Angola-American credibility nexus was naturally Kissinger. His real-politik, global perspective, while not shared by all in the State Department, especially those in the African Bureau, eventually won the day – and, more importantly, the president's agreement – on what the United States needed to do in Angola given the stakes as he saw them.

Those stakes, as he was quick to point out, involved much more than Angola. Rather, as he told Senator Clark on several occasions, they involved the global consequences if

And: 'I think they'll live to regret it.'" Anthony Lewis, "The Politics of Patriotism," *New York Times*, February 16, 1976, 15.

³⁹⁶ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 7.

the United States failed to act. Kissinger apparently agreed with the senator that the Soviet Union was unlikely to gain a foothold in Angola, given its record of failures elsewhere in Africa, remarking, “You’re right from an African point of view.” However, referring to the Russians, he pronounced, “The point is that if they can act with impunity 8,000 miles from their own borders, as they’ve done in Angola, they’ll do it all over the globe.”³⁹⁷ Angola’s significance, then, reached far beyond its borders, its southern African regional context, and its contemporary time frame. For Kissinger, the global architect, and no doubt for the American president, if the Soviet Union, through the MPLA, dictated the outcome in Angola with the United States sitting on the sidelines, American credibility would, again, be called into question. This would further jeopardize the international structure of stability he had worked so hard to achieve and maintain.

As the president and his chief foreign policy adviser witnessed the unfolding events in Angola during the late spring and early summer of 1975, they perceived the situation as a Soviet challenge to international equilibrium. Moreover, the alleged Soviet provocation came at a time when the White House believed that the disastrous ending to the American involvement in Southeast Asia had seriously called into question American competence and commitment to respond to Soviet adventurism. From Washington’s

³⁹⁷ Senator Dick Clark, “Abandon Angola to Russia: Soviets are not Apt to Gain a Tremendous Amount,” interview by *U.S. News and World Report* (February 23, 1976), [database on-line]; available from Lexis-Nexis Academic.

perspective, determined action was required to show that the United States, as the leader of the West, was prepared to carry out its global responsibilities. As Kissinger tells us, those obligations principally involved foreclosing Soviet opportunities and defining the limits of Soviet aims.³⁹⁸

The Credibility Complex

Senator Clark, among others, expressed skepticism about the Ford Administration's argument that the United States needed to intervene in Angola because of "its assumption that a victory by the Soviet-backed faction would prove that the United States does not have the will to defend the world against Soviet aggression."³⁹⁹ However, the link between the idea of American credibility and American actions in Angola ran consistently throughout the Executive Branch's consideration of the Angolan conflict in the weeks and months before the July decision to intervene. Kissinger and others also unfailingly followed this line of reasoning during the debates over the Tunney Amendment and during Senator Clark's hearings in early 1976, which resulted in the passage of his amendment to the Foreign Assistance Bill, permanently cutting off funds to the pro-Western factions in Angola.

There was some dissension in the ranks over the reason for the American involvement, but not at the highest levels. Some regionally oriented State Department

³⁹⁸ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 119.

³⁹⁹ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 2.

and CIA officials apparently believed that the United States' main concern with a Communist MPLA regime in Angola was the potential for instability throughout southern Africa, which would affect the security of pro-Western Zaire and Zambia. Moreover, the possibility of racial war in South Africa and Rhodesia would increase if the radical Popular Movement, supported by its Soviet and Cuban allies, decided to aid and abet other liberations movements in the region.⁴⁰⁰

However, neither Kissinger, nor the president, nor any of the other leading figures, such as African Bureau chiefs Ed Mulcahy or William Schauffele and CIA Director Colby, advanced this argument to explain the primary reason as to why the United States intervened.⁴⁰¹ They did point out, frequently, that they had considered the potentially

⁴⁰⁰ The idea that the major concern of the United States in the outcome of the Angolan conflict revolved around a victorious MPLA supporting other liberation movements in southern Africa, thereby increasing instability and also weakening South Africa's attempts to construct friendly relations with its more moderate neighbors, such as Malawi and Zambia (South Africa's own détente policy), was advanced in several official documents by members of the State Department and the CIA. In June 1975, for example, an inter-agency task force consisting primarily of State and Agency members issued a report that stated, "A Neto victory, if accompanied by Angolan militancy against efforts at détente in southern Africa, could worsen the racial problems in that area (Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa) and adversely affect U.S. interest in a peaceful resolution of these problems." "Special Sensitive Memorandum Regarding Response to NSSM 224: 'United States Policy toward Angola,'" June 25, 1975, p. 4 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive. Also, a December 1975 State Department background paper for Under Secretary of State Sisco's meeting with a congressional delegation raised the issue of instability in the region as a major U.S. concern, noting, "A radical Soviet-backed regime in Angola might be inclined to heat up the racial situation by supporting guerrilla movements in southern Africa." "State Department Letter with Enclosures from AF – Edward W. Mulcahy, Acting, to Mr. Sisco, Subject: Your Breakfast Meeting December 18 with Members of the House of Representatives – Angola, Enclosure 'U.S. Objectives in Angola,'" p. 1 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive.

⁴⁰¹ This disagreement (or perhaps confusion?) over the reason why the United States became involved in Angola – a not-insignificant disagreement primarily between the president, Kissinger, and the highest levels of the State Department and CIA on the one hand, and lower ranking members of the executive

adverse security and economic ramifications of a neighboring, ostensibly hostile and Communist Angola for Zaire and Zambia. This consideration, however, did not stand alone on its own merits, but was always part of the main argument that Moscow's alleged adventurism in Angola, where it had no historical interests, was a test of American will power and resolve to assist friends in resisting Communist aggression; failure to act decisively would weaken American credibility and have serious consequences for global stability, and hence, American national security.

Further, in justifying the necessity for American involvement, high-level officials, unlike those at lower ranks, avoided discussing the potential for racial warfare between the last bastions of white supremacy in the region and the black liberation movements. In fact, as shown by the declassified transcripts of Kissinger's weekly State Department

bureaucracy on the other – was highlighted in an Op-ed by Graham Hovey of the *New York Times*. He argued that the Tunney Amendment passed in the Senate primarily because different members of the Executive Branch gave different accounts to the senators when asked why the United States intervened in Angola. In testimony before several of the Senate committees considering the issue, Kissinger asserted that the problem was not whether the MPLA won in Angola, “but whether the United States still has the will to behave as a great power and to resist Soviet military intervention in an area where there is no legitimate Soviet interest. In deploring the Senate action, President Ford spoke in a similar vein.” In contrast, in testimony before the same committees, lower-ranking State and CIA officials told the senators that the main reason for American assistance to the anti-MPLA factions was that, “a victory for M.P.L.A. would make catastrophic war between whites and blacks in southern Africa more likely. They say a victorious M.P.L.A. could give maximum help to the guerrilla organization known as S.W.A.P.O., which carries out intermittent raids on Namibia (South-West Africa). They envision an alliance of M.P.L.A., S.W.A.P.O., the revolutionary government of Mozambique and the more radical black Rhodesian faction bent on settling the issue in Namibia, Rhodesia and finally South Africa itself by force, rather than by negotiation.” Given this divergence in the policy line, which brought into question the believability of both the president and Kissinger, Hovey correctly predicted that the House, like the Senate before it, would also pass the Tunney Amendment. Graham Hovey, “Fog and Worse on Angola,” *New York Times*, December 30, 1975, 25.

meetings, he rarely exhibited any concern about white South Africa's fate if the MPLA were to win in Angola. From his perspective, then, this issue was clearly subordinate to his principal argument that emphasized the importance of a demonstration of American resolve through actions.⁴⁰²

Interestingly, despite his previous concerns about falling dominoes in Southeast Asia, Kissinger never openly argued that either Zambia or Zaire would "fall to Communism" as a result of pressure from a Soviet-dominated Angola. Rather, he instead suggested that something akin to the "Finlandization" of these pro-Western nations in sub-Saharan Africa would occur, although he never used that exact terminology.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰² References to the potential threat to South Africa are few and far between in Kissinger's various meetings with his colleagues both prior to and after the July decision to intervene. In one meeting prior to that decision, in which the alleged coup attempt in Zaire and the situation next door in Angola were the only two topics, Kissinger, incorrectly labeling Zaire as the largest country in Africa, noted, "It simply cannot be in our interest to have Angola go communist. It is next to the largest country in Africa and it's next to South Africa." Department of State, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976, Volume E-6, Documents on Africa, 1973-1976*, "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Africa," June 18, 1975 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov>. The Secretary of State did not elaborate upon this comment, probably demonstrating that while South Africa's fate may have crossed his mind, he did not dwell on it or consider it as a preeminent consideration for American action in Angola.

⁴⁰³ In the immediate aftermath of the American defeat in South Vietnam (or "retreat," as President Ford preferred), Kissinger gave an interview to Barbara Walters on NBC's "Today" show. He started the interview with a reference to the Domino Theory and the recent events in Southeast Asia. "There is in almost every major event a domino effect." He then listed the three elements inherent in the effect as: "1) a change in the balance of forces, 2) 'the perception of other countries' and 3) 'the general psychological climate that is created in the world as to who is advancing and who is withdrawing...this is inevitable.'" Kissinger's interview as reported by Stephen S. Rosenfeld, "Kissinger's Postwar Confusion," *Washington Post*, May 9, 1975, sec. A, p. 28. Having asserted his belief in the Domino Theory, he then retreated from this position somewhat by noting that perhaps the United States had made a mistake in South Vietnam by viewing the conflict in global terms, noting, "we perhaps might have perceived it more in Vietnamese terms rather than as the outward thrust of a global conspiracy." Ibid. Perhaps this was a lesson the foreign policy architect took from Vietnam and applied to Angola, that is, comparing the effects of a Communist

He pessimistically, and probably unrealistically, envisioned that the whole of southern Africa, especially pro-American Zaire, which shared a long border with Angola, would probably move in an anti-Western direction if the United States abdicated its global responsibilities and stayed clear of the Angolan conflict. He told the National Security Council in late June 1975, for example, that if the United States decided to remain neutral, an option he adamantly opposed, and let the Angolan situation run its course, the probable consequences would be “that Neto would establish a dominant position...Angola would go in a leftward direction; and Zaire would conclude that we have disinterested ourselves in that part of the world and move towards anti-Americanism.”⁴⁰⁴

In October 1975, Kissinger would yet again reaffirm his concern over the “Finlandization” effects of a Soviet-backed MPLA victory on the rest of the region. In response to a question about the American involvement in Angola, which originated from an American Embassy officer in Kinshasa, Kissinger told the official, “My assessment was if the Soviet Union can interfere eight thousand miles from home in an undisputed

Angola to more of a “Finlandization” of its neighbors rather than casting them as dominoes about to fall to a Communist thrust in southern Africa. He apparently also saw such a future for Western Europe if the United States abdicated its leading role in the Western Alliance and allowed its allies to take the lead in developing their own policies of détente with the Soviet Union. This concern was magnified by the specter of Eurocommunism, and after April 1974, by the increasingly leftist trend in Portugal, as previously discussed.

⁴⁰⁴ National Security Council, “Minutes of a National Security Council (NSC) Meeting Concerning Soviet Arms Shipments to Rebel Forces in Angola, June 27, 1975, pp. 3-4 [database on-line]; available from Declassified Documents Reference System.

way...then the Southern African countries must conclude that the U.S. had abdicated in Southern Africa. They will have two choices as to where to turn – to China or to the U.S.S.R. This tendency will then spread. It would shift Tanzania and others further left, and have a major effect in Africa.”⁴⁰⁵

The Secretary of State’s position, then, was that American passivity in the face of alleged Soviet aggression would tip the African dimension of the international balance of power in favor of the Communist world. This situation could occur even if some countries, such as Zaire, did not become Communist but merely anti-American, and it would have serious consequences for the nation’s international security interests, especially the objective of maintaining global equilibrium with the Soviet Union.

Kissinger’s gloomy idea about the “Finlandization” of southern Africa, of course, was directly related to the credibility component of American foreign policy - the main element of the administration’s broad perspective on the American stakes in Angola.

Washington officials justified American intervention on the grounds that it was necessary

⁴⁰⁵ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 792. Other high-ranking Ford Administration officials echoed Kissinger’s sentiments on this issue. William Hyland, the State Department’s Intelligence and Research Bureau chief, expressed his thoughts on the consequences of an MPLA victory on southern Africa. “The outlook is for a continuing civil war...Over time, the MPLA, assuming strong Soviet support, will gain control over most of the country, forcing Savimbi to come to terms, especially if Kaunda believes he must deal with the MPLA for access to the sea; in this case, Mobutu will probably also look to a settlement...The main point for the US is that the African participants should not be led to this conclusion because they find us a weak reed.” Department of State, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976, Volume E-6, Documents of Africa, 1973-1976*, “Memorandum from William G. Hyland to the Secretary, Subject: Comments on Embassy Kinshasa Cable on Angola,” October 15, 1975 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov>.

to demonstrate American firmness, to friends and foes alike, in the face of what they contended was Soviet expansionism. Resolute American action in Angola would discourage, or deter, further Soviet (and Cuban) adventurism elsewhere and encourage pro-Western nations in southern Africa to resist the imposition of a Marxist government through the force of Soviet arms and Cuban proxy combatants.

Assistant Secretary of State William E. Schauffele, Jr., summed up this perspective by predicting the results of an MPLA victory if the United States failed to respond adequately to the Angolan crisis:

- Moscow and Havana may see themselves shortly in a position to pursue their ambitions elsewhere under the dangerously mistaken notion that in succeeding once they can succeed again.
- In the post-Angolan atmosphere of insecurity and disillusionment with the lack of U.S. support, the states neighboring Angola – Zaire and Zambia – must be under great pressure to seek an accommodation disadvantageous to them or see their vital exit to the ocean threatened.
- Other African states would adjust to the realities of power so vividly demonstrated in Angola by the Soviet airlift and the Cuban expeditionary force.
- Those Soviet officials who pushed this “national liberation” struggle on the heels of Viet-Nam will have been proven right. Indeed, the sweeping returns in Africa from involvement in a single internal power struggle can only encourage similar adventures elsewhere.
- And in the last analysis we risk bringing on other confrontations in the future under conditions less advantageous to us and more dangerous to us all.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁶ William E. Schauffele, Jr., “The African Dimension of the Angolan Conflict,” *The Department of State Bulletin* LXXIV, no. 1914 (March 1, 1976): 282-283. These are the same comments Assistant Secretary

In contrast to the administration's arguments about what was at stake for the United States in Angola, the majority of the Congress did not see the situation in Angola, and particularly the American involvement there, in the same light. Rather, the supporters of first the Tunney Amendment, and later the Clark Amendment, expressed their belief that Angola was not the place to unfurl the flag of American credibility.⁴⁰⁷ Senator Birch Bayh (D-IN) succinctly captured this sense of the Congress in his own arguments in support of the Tunney Amendment, which are equally applicable to the debate over the follow-on Clark Amendment. "The war in Angola presents the first test of American policy after Vietnam. Unfortunately, our performance to date indicates that we have not learned from our mistakes. Rather than recognizing our limitations and carefully analyzing our interests, we are again plunging into a conflict in a far corner of the world as if we believed it was still our mission to serve as policeman of the world."⁴⁰⁸

Schaufele made in his February 6, 1976 testimony before Senator Clark's Subcommittee on African Affairs.

⁴⁰⁷ In his constituent newsletter of December 1975, Senator Clifford P. Case (R-NJ), expressing the sentiments of most of his colleagues wrote, "The rain forests of Angola are the wrong place to nail the flag of American prestige," accusing the Ford Administration of trying to superimpose the "big picture" of American-Soviet relations upon a fragmented tribal mosaic and a civil war "that is basically a tribal and personality conflict." "Newsletter-190: U.S. Policy in Angola," pp. 1, 2, December 1975, White House Central File Subject File, CO7: Angola 3/1/76 – 1/20/77, Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library. Senator Clifford was one of the congressmen briefed by the administration after President Ford's decision in July to support the pro-American factions in Angola. Like Senator Clark and others, he had voiced no objections at the time. Later, however, like many of his colleagues, as the extent of the American involvement became clearer and details were leaked to the press, he became a staunch supporter of both the Tunney and Clark Amendments.

⁴⁰⁸ *Congressional Record - Senate*, 94th Cong., 2d sess., Senator Bayh, "U.S. Intervention in Angola," December 15, 1975, S 22086.

The administration rejected this reasoning, reaffirming its position on the link between American leadership and resolve in Angola and global stability. Following the Senate's passage of the Tunney Amendment on December 18, 1975, for example, President Ford, in sync with Kissinger's global thinking and his emphasis on the issue of American credibility, called the vote an "abdication of responsibility," which would have the gravest consequences for the long-term position of the United States and for international order. "A great nation cannot escape its responsibilities. Responsibilities abandoned today will return as more acute crises tomorrow."⁴⁰⁹

In an ironic twist of history, 1975 had started out with President Ford requesting that Congress appropriate additional monies to two American allies in Southeast Asia who faced defeat by Communist-supported, indigenous forces. The year ended with the president again requesting additional funding for pro-Western movements in far-off Angola, which also faced defeat by a Communist-supported indigenous movement. These 11th hour requests came about because the makers of American foreign policy believed that any perceived sign of American weakness or indecision would cause adversaries to question whether American threats and warnings should be taken seriously

⁴⁰⁹ "Ford Public Statement/Press Release on Senate Vote on Tunney Amendment to Defense Appropriations Bill," undated, White House Central Files, Subject File, FO 3-2/CO7: Mutual Security/Angola, Box 22, Gerald R. Ford Library. In his autobiography, President Ford elaborated on his thoughts about the rejection of the last-minute plan to reinforce the FNLA and UNITA. He was especially concerned about the consequences for American leadership of the Western bloc, noting that after the vote, "The French backed off, unwilling to act alone." Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal* (Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1979): 345.

and friends to wonder if the United States could be counted upon to come to their aid if needed. American credibility would suffer as a result, with adverse consequences both for the nation's future role in the world and international equilibrium.

The Stance – The Soviet Union is the Culprit

The second part of this chapter examines the timelines, or chronological sequence, of the American intervention, again as told by officials of the Ford Administration. Where necessary to augment and clarify the official government argument advanced in support of the American involvement, I have also included the analyses and assessments of the Angolan situation prepared at the time and shortly thereafter by various government bureaucracies, largely the CIA's Africa Division and the State Department's African Bureau. The major question in the discussion is, "Which nation, the Soviet Union or the United States, initially provoked a response from the other that, in turn, lead to an intensifying action-reaction cycle and the escalation of the Angolan conflict into a civil war and super-power crises?"

The Ford Administration consistently argued that the United States' involvement came only after large Soviet arms deliveries to the MPLA. They alleged this operation was a planned, systematic rearming of Agostinho Neto's forces, which began in the late summer of 1974. The Soviet effort emboldened the Popular Movement to attempt to

seize power by force of arms, assisted initially by a contingent of Cuban trainers and advisers and later by actual Cuban combatants.

In contrast to this type of Soviet provocation, officials contended that only in July 1975 did the United States decide to act, after continuing appeals from Angola's pro-Western neighbors, most notably Zaire and Zambia. Even then, the United States provided only limited financial and military support to the FNLA and UNITA. Under Secretary of State Joseph J. Sisco clearly stated this position, in December 1975, in an effort to convince key members of the House of Representatives that they should reject the Tunney Amendment, even as the Senate was approving the measure. Mr. Sisco based the key points of his meeting with the congressional delegation on a briefing paper from the State Department's African Bureau (AF). While quite lengthy, it can be summarized as follows:

United States policy toward Angola was, until mid 75, one of noninvolvement. Despite the political upheavals in Portugal, we hoped Portugal and Angola's liberation movements could work out a peaceful transition to independence...Others did not share this view. Soviet arms shipments changed the balance of power and ruined hopes for a compromise. Because the MPLA-Soviets attempted to seize power in Angola, FNLA/UNITA appealed to us for help. Angola's neighbors also looked to us to counter the Soviet intrusion, especially Zaire and Zambia. After exhaustive assessment, the Executive Branch approved, in July, a program of special activities. The program was not intended to crush the MPLA. Our limited commitments have two objectives: 1) preventing the MPLA and its Soviet and Cuban backers from achieving a quick

military take-over of Angola; and 2) sufficiently redressing the balance among Angola's movements to facilitate a political solution.⁴¹⁰

President Ford followed up this executive-legislative meeting with a letter to Speaker Carl Albert just prior to the House vote on the amendment in late January 1976, reiterating the State Department's argument and concluding, "As I have stated on a number of occasions, the US seeks no special advantage in Angola, nor are we opposed to the MPLA faction per se. Our sole objective has been to preserve the opportunity for this Angolan problem to be resolved by Angolans, and not through the application of brute military force by the Soviet Union and Cuba."⁴¹¹

Who Did What, and When: Part One

August 1974 saw Washington, D.C., indeed the entire nation, suffused with uncertainty as a result of President Richard M. Nixon's resignation on the 9th and the ascendancy to the Oval Office of the former unelected vice president and now unelected president, Gerald R. Ford. However, this did not prevent Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, although belatedly, from meeting with his Zairian counterpart, Umba-di-

⁴¹⁰“ State Department Letter with Enclosures from AF – Edward W. Mulcahy, Acting, to Mr. Sisco, Subject: Your Breakfast Meeting December 18 with Members of the House of Representatives – Angola, Enclosure ‘U.S. Policy in Angola,’” p. 1 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive.

⁴¹¹ Gerald R. Ford Letter to Carl Albert, Speaker of the House, January 27, 1976, p. 2, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Country File Africa, Angola (3), Box 1, Gerald R. Ford Library.

Letete, on August 13.⁴¹² After the exchange of normal diplomatic niceties, Umba quickly got down to the important items on his agenda. First, he assured Kissinger that President Mobutu had no intentions of nationalizing foreign assets in Zaire, totaling one and one-half billion dollars, mostly from the United States. Kissinger's response was to remark that American-Zairian relations were of great importance and that the United States regarded Zaire as "a king-pin in our policies toward Africa."⁴¹³

Apparently satisfied with this response, Umba then proceeded to his second point, which was to ask for American support for Holden Roberto, including increased American contacts with the FNLA leader. He described Roberto as "a genuine non-

⁴¹² In the summer of 1974, in addition to his concern over pressing global matters, Kissinger was, no doubt, also worried over what his relationship would be with the new president, especially how that relationship would affect his continuation as the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Secretary of State. President Ford, a congressman since 1948, had limited experience in foreign policy. As early as March 1974, with the Watergate hearings running full throttle and the Nixon presidency in increasing jeopardy, then Vice President Ford reportedly told John Osborne of *The New Republic* that he would keep Kissinger on as his top foreign policy adviser. Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography*, 601. Isaacson also relates that during Nixon's final month in office, with the fate of his presidency now sealed, Kissinger assumed the responsibility of personally bringing the president-to-be up to date on the major foreign policy issues. In his memoirs, Ford acknowledged that he personally called Kissinger and told him, "Henry, I need you." Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 30. Although President Ford was set on bringing his own team into the Oval Office, including Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, as noted by historian Jussi Hanhimaki, "The new president had no intention of messing around with the remaining original of his predecessor: Henry Kissinger." Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 361. Despite the eventual removal of many of Nixon's top advisers and some of Kissinger's trusted confidantes, Alexander Haig for example, Kissinger's position with the new president was solid, especially after President Ford appointed Nelson Rockefeller, Kissinger's long-time friend, ally and mentor, as his vice president.

⁴¹³ Umba expressed concern over what he believed to be "Belgium's efforts to discredit Zaire in the eyes of many foreigners," in which the former, at least according to Umba, was trying to convince Western investors that Zaire was about to move against all foreign investment in the country. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, vol. E-6, *Documents on Africa, 1973-1976*, Department of State, "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: US-Zaire Relations," August 13, 1974 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov>.

communist patriot” and “the most genuine of the liberation leaders,” who shared the same political views as Zaire itself. Agostinho Neto, on the other hand, “is a propagandist, a man of talk and no action,” and “fortunately,” the MPLA was “on its back.” The discussion on Angola dominated the conversation and Secretary Kissinger told Umba that the United States would consider his request for increased contacts with, as well as support for, Holden Roberto. Umba emphasized that events in Angola “could very well move quite fast. It is important that events not pass us by,” suggesting he preferred an answer to his request sooner rather than later. Kissinger declined to promise anything other than consideration.⁴¹⁴

The Secretary of State subsequently sent a follow-up telegram to the American Embassy in Kinshasa (with a copy to the Lisbon Embassy and the Consulate General in Luanda) detailing his conversation with Umba. The telegram from the Secretary of State began by noting that he had received the Zairian foreign minister for a forty-five minute meeting. “As expected Umba appealed for US support of Holden Roberto. Secretary said US would consider seriously GOZ’s request.” After this introduction, Kissinger summarized the important parts of the meeting, noting that while he told Umba

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

that the United States would consider the issue of increased support for Holden Robert and raising the level of contact with him, he had made no promises.⁴¹⁵

Kissinger would later testify, in late January 1976, that while the United States had received several requests in 1974 for support of “other Angolan elements,” probably referring primarily to the FNLA but possibly also Jonas Savimbi’s UNITA, the United States turned them down.⁴¹⁶ The August 13 conversation and Kissinger’s follow-up telegram appear to support the administration’s allegations that the United States stayed away from the Angolan situation, at least during 1974, even after Zaire and others had

⁴¹⁵ Department of State Telegram, Subject: Secretary’s Meeting with Umba-Di-Lutete, August 14, 1974, pp. 1, 2, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams from SecState – EXDIS, Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library. “GOZ” is the Government of Zaire. Journalist Bruce Oudes, an outspoken critic of American foreign policy in Africa and of the American involvement in Angola, ironically lends credence to Kissinger’s claim that the United States stayed out of the Angolan imbroglio until 1975. Citing an informed American diplomat, Oudes alleges that in the summer of 1974, the CIA began to advocate American intervention in Angola in support of the FNLA and perhaps also UNITA. The Agency pressured Donald Easum, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, to adopt this position. Easum resisted this pressure, but his successor in early 1975, Nathaniel Davis was ultimately much less successful. Oudes implicates Lawrence R. Devlin, the CIA station chief in Kinshasa during the turbulent events in 1965, which brought President Mobutu to power in Zaire via a military coup, as the impetus behind the CIA’s push for American involvement. Devlin, the CIA’s clandestine operations director for Africa prior to his June 1974 retirement from the agency, immediately returned to Kinshasa as the Zairian representative of Maurice Tempelsman, where, as a friend and ally of Mobutu (and no doubt Holden Roberto), he acted as an unofficial liaison between the latter and the CIA in both Kinshasa and Langley, VA. Oudes notes that the CIA pressure on Easum began “within weeks after Mr. Devlin’s return to Kinshasa in his retirement job.” Bruce Oudes, “South Africa, U.S. Secrets,” *Baltimore Sun*, 22 February 1976. Piero Gleijeses somewhat substantiates Oudes assessment. Based upon his personal interview with Easum, he says that it was Devlin’s successor as the African division chief in the CIA’s Directorate of Operations, Jim Potts, who actually began pressuring Easum, in mid-1974, on the issue of United States aid for Holden Roberto. The Assistant Secretary for Africa disagreed, and “To Easum’s knowledge, Potts ‘didn’t go higher,’ that is, directly to Kissinger.” Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 281.

⁴¹⁶ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 9.

asked for American support for Holden Roberto. As we will see in Chapter 7, however, this was not the case.

The opening volley of the Ford Administration's argument, then, is that despite such requests after the Portuguese had decided to grant Angolan independence, the United States maintained its distance from the Angolan situation.⁴¹⁷ It wasn't until January 22, 1975, a week after the three liberation movements had agreed with the Portuguese to follow a political path to independence, that the United States, specifically the Forty Committee, decided to provide Holden Roberto with \$300,000. The allocation was to be used for political purposes as the FNLA prepared for participation in the elections scheduled for 31 October 1975. The administration contended that this sum was not only modest, given the Soviet arms deliveries of the previous fall (as will be discussed), but also that the Forty Committee refused to authorize any support whatsoever for Jonas Savimbi's movement. As noted by Kissinger, "Later it was charged that the modest

⁴¹⁷ In the summer of 1974, the United States did change its position on the level of contacts with the various liberation movements, authorizing contacts up to the Chief of Mission level. This action was probably related to the accelerating road to Angolan independence, but came only after Portuguese Foreign Minister Soares, apparently acting for his government, told Kissinger the Portuguese posed no objection to the United States' "taking up contact with the national liberation movements." "Minutes from the Secretary's Principals' and Regional Staff Meeting," July 10, 1974 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts. By about mid-July 1974, then, the American Consul General in Luanda, Tom Killoran, was free to speak directly to all three.

increase in the political subsidy to Roberto triggered all subsequent escalations. This is an absurdity.”⁴¹⁸

Who Did What, and When: Part Two

The second part of the administration’s argument is that the Soviet Union resumed its support to the MPLA in August 1974, months before the United States became involved in Angola. This resumption of support followed a twenty-month hiatus in its historical assistance to the movement, which dated back to at least the mid-1960s. Moreover, it occurred, perhaps not coincidentally, at the same time as the MFA in Lisbon announced its two-year plan for Angolan independence. The renewed support apparently included both weapons deliveries and some form of financial assistance probably intended for political purposes.

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, William E. Schaufele, Jr., testified before Senator Clark’s 1976 African Subcommittee hearings on 6 February. He reaffirmed Kissinger’s previous testimony that the United States had rejected African requests to provide military assistance to the FNLA in 1974, showing restraint while maintaining an interested, but non-involved, stance on the Angolan situation. In contrast, the Soviet Union’s renewed support to the MPLA, beginning in August 1974, involved “extensive” rearming of the Popular Movement.

⁴¹⁸ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795.

Schaufele alleged that the first Soviet arms shipment, of what was to grow into an estimated \$6 million total delivery between August 1974 and January 1975, was initially funneled through the OAU's Liberation Committee in Dar-es-Salaam. He went on to claim that since there was no evidence that this first consignment reached any other of the southern African liberation movements, the MPLA was presumably the intended recipient. By October or November, the Cabindan enclave, where the MPLA was ascendant, and the Congo (Brazzaville), a leftist leaning government that maintained friendly relations with both the Kremlin and Havana, became the main arms transfer points for the MPLA.⁴¹⁹

Although Schaufele admitted that the United States did not know the exact quantities of Soviet arms delivered between August 1974 and January 1975, "they were sufficient to equip a 5,000-7,000 man MPLA force by January 1975 (up from perhaps 1,500 in August 1974, exclusive of Chipenda's units), as well as provide thousands of AK-47s to the amorphous "People's Power" in the Luanda ghettos. These latter arms were first used in the fighting in Luanda in November 1974 between MPLA and FNLA."⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁹ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 184. There is a discrepancy in Schaufele's testimony on the exact month of the first consignment of Soviet arms to the MPLA in late 1974. He originally testified that Soviet arms deliveries to the MPLA did not resume until October 1974. *Ibid.*, 175. When further questioned by Senator Clark about the exact time the extensive rearming began, including how much was delivered, Schaufele said he did not have that information with him. Shortly thereafter, based upon information provided by the State Department, he noted the August date as the first indications of renewed Soviet arms shipments to the MPLA. *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

On the political front, after the MPLA and the other two movements had opened offices in Luanda in early November 1974 following their respective ceasefires with the Portuguese government, the MPLA made no attempt to conceal its restored backing. Schaufele testified, “From the arrival of the MPLA delegation in Luanda in November 1974, it was obvious they suffered no lack of funds to propagandize and organize their political backing.”⁴²¹ In late 1974, then, even as the Soviet Union continued its delivery of arms to the MPLA and skirmishes between the MPLA and FNLA intensified, especially in Luanda where over 100 deaths were reported in fighting between the two from 5-11 November, the United States stayed clear of the rapidly deteriorating situation.⁴²²

On January 6, 1975, following the agreement in Mombasa, Kenya, by the three Angolan liberation movements to present a unified front in preparation for independence negotiations with the Portuguese at Alvor, Kissinger received an update from the State Department on the Angolan situation. During the course of the briefing on Angola, as related by Kissinger, he asked a question that, according to him, exhibited the continued American disinterest in and distance from events in Angola. “It surely attested to our

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, *United States Policy on Angola: Hearing before the Committee on International Relations*, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., January 26, 1976, 38. This information on the violence in Luanda was contained in the *Appendix: Chronology of Events Relating to Angola (April 25, 1974-January 29, 1976)*.

detachment from the fray when I asked...which of the contending groups was most compatible with the American national interest.” The Secretary’s question came despite the CIA’s long-time association with Holden Roberto and his National Front, which the Agency judged most likely to succeed in any power struggle, and its advocacy of American support for the FNLA.⁴²³

The Ford Administration also contended that it supported the Alvor accord, while the Soviet Union ignored it by arming the MPLA. As previously discussed, the 15 January 1975 Alvor agreement between Lisbon and the three liberation movements ostensibly

⁴²³ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795. The actual minutes of the meeting read somewhat differently from Kissinger’s account, but the gist of the discussion is the same. Kissinger asked Edward Mulcahy, then the acting assistant secretary for Africa, what AF was doing on the Angolan issue. Mulcahy responded that his bureau had an options paper almost ready for Kissinger’s review. Kissinger then stated that he wanted to see it as soon as possible and asked, “Would it also include your views as to which group is best for us?” Mulcahy replied, “Yes, sir.” “Minutes from the Secretary’s 8:00 a.m. Staff Meeting – January 6, 1975,” pp. 5-6 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts Collection. Historian Odd Arne Westad’s analysis of the Angolan crisis supports Kissinger’s argument that the United States remained detached from the developing situation in early 1975. He notes that the South African ambassador to Washington, J.S.F. Botha, in a message to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs in which he discussed the deepening Angolan situation and the increasing South African concerns, reported that Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Donald Easum, has told him in January that the Ford Administration had “so little interest that it would take a major sales job to persuade any American agency to become involved in a new program in Africa.” Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 229-230. Kissinger’s disinterest in the Angolan situation in early 1975 is probably attributable to several circumstances. First, his carefully crafted triangular diplomacy with the Soviet Union and China had begun to unravel by late 1974-early 1975. He no doubt devoted much of his attention to that complex issue. Secondly, despite his shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East, peace in the region seemed as far off as ever. Thirdly, Secretary of State Kissinger was notorious for his disdain of, and disregard, for events in the southern hemisphere, as was discussed in Chapter 2. Finally, and importantly for this study, the CIA and State’s African Bureau had been briefing him that Holden Roberto’s FNLA was in the driver’s seat in Angola, militarily and politically, as will be discussed in later chapters. This apparently was all Kissinger wanted, or needed, to hear about Angola at the time.

chartered a peaceful and rapid path to Angolan independence. Still, international observers attuned to the Portuguese decolonization process in Angola were not overly optimistic that the peaceful road map would survive the deep animosities among the three factions, especially those between the two largest – the FNLA and MPLA – and the historical propensities of each to seek external support. These sentiments were shared by some of the Portuguese authorities involved in reaching the accord.

According to journalist Henry Giniger, one official who was present at the opening session captured the gloomy atmosphere of the event. Referring to the leaders of the liberation movements, he remarked, “I wondered to myself who among them would be alive a year from now.”⁴²⁴ Soon afterwards, when talks briefly stalled as the three liberation movements continued to work out the details, journalist Giniger observed that the Portuguese were relieved when a common front was reached after daylong negotiations among the three. Believing, then, that a full agreement could be quickly reached, “The Portuguese were hoping the groups’ unity would last long enough for Portugal to disengage, completing her decolonization process in Africa.”⁴²⁵

At the signing ceremony signaling the successful conclusion to the talks, Giniger summed up the still generally pessimistic mood by noting that many of the Portuguese

⁴²⁴ Henry Giniger, “For Independent Angola, A Great Threat of Strife, *New York Times*, January 16, 1975, 12.

⁴²⁵ Henry Giniger, “Angolans Offer Plan to Portugal,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1975, 11.

expected the agreement to eventually break down “as rivalries, encouraged by outside interests, erupt.”⁴²⁶

In public, Kissinger spoke favorably, if somewhat pessimistically, of the Portuguese effort to promote a peaceful transition to Angolan independence, but still implying that the United States honored Lisbon’s call for restraint by all outside parties.⁴²⁷ Hence, he contended, “This is why the United States did not support UNITA and had only the most

⁴²⁶ Giniger, “For Independent Angola, A Great Threat to Strife.” Not everyone, apparently, was as somber about the prospects of a non-violent road to independence as those officials referred to by Mr. Giniger. Nicholas Ashford, a British journalist present at the Alvor accord’s signing ceremony, reported a cautious optimism among some of those Portuguese officials present. “Today’s ceremony virtually completes a decolonization process which began only nine months ago when the Army ousted the right-wing Caetano regime. Despite some bloodshed...decolonization has so far gone surprisingly smoothly. Whether it will continue to do so remains to be seen. However, it is recognized that a major step toward unification has been taken during the Mombasa talks 10 days ago and during the current negotiations.” Nicolas Ashford, “Angola Independence Set for November at Portugal Signing,” *Times* (London), January 16, 1975, 8.

⁴²⁷ In reference to Kissinger’s pessimism over the Alvor agreement – a trait that seemed inherent in the Secretary of State’s character – he, like many others both within and outside the government, were quick to point out that the fulfillment of the Alvor provisions fundamentally rested on the ability of the three factions to work together and cooperate – a proclivity they had not historically demonstrated. Kissinger testified, for example, “The prospect of an independent Angola was clouded by the intense rivalry of the FNLA, MPLA and UNITA.” Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 9. Later, he would reiterate his gloomy view of the chances for Alvor’s success by referring to the article by Henry Giniger, previously cited in note 424, in which the sentiments of at least one official Portuguese observer of the negotiations expressed the widespread lingering doubts on the viability and durability of any agreement among the three factions. Alluding first to a *New York Times* editorial which celebrated the signing of the accord, Kissinger noted, somewhat caustically, that the *Times*’ correspondent on the ground (Giniger), “proved closer to the Angolan reality when he quoted one observer who had seen Roberto, Neto, and Savimbi together: ‘I wondered to myself who among them would be alive a year from now.’” Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795. Other newspapers also skeptically reported on the prospects for successful implementation of the agreement, especially its ability to temper the internecine rivalry of the three factions. David Ottaway, for instance, wrote, “The entire complicated arrangement appears to be little more than a holding operation until the election of a constituent assembly in October, out of which a single united leadership for an independent Angola would, it is hoped, emerge. But the continuing independence of each nationalist group, all mutually hostile and deeply suspicious of one another’s intentions, does not augur well for peace before or after the colony’s liberation from Portugal. David B. Ottaway, “Dissident Nationalist Leader Threatens Angola Civil War,” *Washington Post*, January 29, 1975, sec A, p. 18.

modest support for the FNLA,” referring, yet again, to the Forty Committee’s authorization of \$300,000 for the movement in January 1975.⁴²⁸

In contrast, Ford officials alleged that the Soviet Union, encouraged by the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), whose political prospects in the metropole in the fall of 1974 were on the rise, believed that a parallel revolutionary situation was developing in Angola.⁴²⁹ The Kremlin decided, then, to reinforce this ideological windfall by a renewal of military and financial support to its long-term client, the MPLA, with the goal of putting Neto’s movement into power in Angola. It was this decision, and its ensuing rearmament actions, that set the stage for the later, rapid deterioration of the Alvor agreement and the escalation of the factional struggle into a full-scale civil war.

Who Did What, and When: Part Three

The third part of the administration’s overall argument in defense of the American involvement relates to the next phase of the Angolan crisis, essentially encompassing the installation of the transitional government on 31 January up to late March 1975. As alleged by spokesmen for the Ford Administration, by the end of January, the Soviet Union’s military support to the MPLA, begun in the fall of 1974, had tapered off.

⁴²⁸ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795.

⁴²⁹ Charles K. Ebinger supports Kissinger’s assertion that the PCP was instrumental in the Soviet decision to resume its support to the MPLA in 1974. In his November 9, 1974 interview with Alvaro Cunhal, Secretary General of the PCP, Ebinger noted that Cunhal claimed that the renewed support for the MPLA came “on the advice of the Portuguese Communist Party.” Charles K. Ebinger, “External Intervention in Internal War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Angolan Civil War,” *Orbis* 20, no. 3 (Fall 1976): 688.

However, they claimed that Moscow significantly expanded its weapons assistance in the early spring of 1975, using the Congo (Brazzaville) as the primary transshipment point for Soviet arms. At the same time, the flow of arms from other Communist bloc nations also increased.

Kissinger and others contended that the objective of this massive influx of weapons and equipment was to install the MPLA, by force of arms, as the post-independence Angolan government, precluding any participation by the FNLA and UNITA. They alleged that the increasingly militant actions of the MPLA, beginning in February 1975, as discussed below, visibly demonstrated this objective.

In February 1975, there were several minor clashes between the partisans of the MPLA and the FNLA both in Luanda and its environs and to the north and east of the capital, the traditional stronghold of the FNLA and its ethnic support base. These skirmishes escalated into several major battles between the National Front and the Popular Movement during the March through June timeframe. The sporadic outbursts of inter-movement violence were followed by short-lived lulls in fighting in the wake of the several ceasefires, none of which lasted more than a few days. Administration officials claimed that the MPLA provoked these actions, citing most frequently the Popular Movement's attack upon the Luanda headquarters of Daniel Chipenda on February 13.

During the assault, the MPLA killed fifteen to twenty of Chipenda's supporters and expelled the remaining members from the capital.⁴³⁰

Jonas Savimbi's UNITA, militarily the smallest and weakest of the three movements, was largely successful in staying clear of the fighting while Holden Roberto's FNLA, according to administration officials, bore the brunt of the noticeable increase in MPLA militancy. Moreover, as alleged, Soviet weapons emboldened the MPLA, which showed through its ensuing belligerent actions that it was not interested in sharing power with its rivals. Thus, as Kissinger was quick to assert, from the earliest moments of the transitional government, the MPLA "had little incentive to fulfill the terms of the Alvor

⁴³⁰ This attack was not technically a violation of the Alvor agreement. Chipenda had not officially joined the FNLA at the time and the Portuguese did not recognize him as a legitimate party to the accords. However, it did demonstrate the fears Neto's MPLA faction still harbored for the discredited, but still powerful and threatening Chipenda and his contingent of seasoned combat veterans. These fears were not unfounded. As reported by historian Daniel Spikes, in early January, Chipenda had returned to Zambia where he assembled many of his fighters and crossed into Angola, collecting more of his guerrillas as he made his way to Luso, in eastern Angola, where the by now substantial force encamped. This movement into eastern Angola "alarmed MPLA leaders in Luanda who feared some units might manage to force their way into the capital." Daniel Spikes, *Angola and the Politics of Intervention: From Local Bush War to Chronic Crisis in Southern Africa* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1993), 140. The MPLA attack on Chipenda's headquarters is discussed by Spikes as well as Marcum, *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare (1962-1976)*, 258, and Colin Legum and Tony Hodges, *After Angola: The War over Southern Africa* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1976), 49. On February 22, following the earlier February attack, Chipenda, the commander of at least 2,000 seasoned combatants, announced his impending merger with the FNLA. In mid-April, he was formally admitted to the FNLA, having been voted into its Revolutionary Council and Political Bureau and also elected as the movement's assistant secretary general. Legum and Hodges, *After Angola*, 49.

accord which would have prevented it from dominating any future coalition government.”⁴³¹

Assistant Secretary Schaufele also emphasized the increasing tendency of the MPLA to independently seek a military solution while ignoring both the accord and the series of ceasefire among the three factions. He contended, “It was the Soviet decision...to step up arms aid to what it apparently regarded as an organization in which it had influence, which destroyed Portugal’s effort through the Alvor agreement of January 1975 to establish a provisional coalition government embracing the three factions. With the prospect of being a minority partner in a postindependence government, and the promise of Soviet arms, the MPLA had no incentive to compromise.”⁴³²

According to the Ford Administration, the Soviet decision to not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively, boost its military support to the MPLA in early 1975 was made in December 1974. The decision came to fruition in early March 1975 as a large Soviet

⁴³¹ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 9.

⁴³² Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 174. Schaufele later expanded upon his accusatory statement by presenting this chronological narrative of the early 1975 events in Angola following the Alvor agreement. Once again justifying the American allocation of “political” funding for Roberto and the FNLA, which he noted was to be dispensed (presumably by the CIA) gradually and was insignificant in comparison to both the earlier 1974 Soviet military aid, which terminated in January 1975, and the massively increased support, which commenced in March, Schaufele stated, “During the skirmishes between the FNLA and MPLA in February, and the major battles of March and April, we noticed an increasing tendency on the part of the MPLA forces to ignore the cease-fires...and to act independently to achieve their maximum military goals. From March through May, not only did the quantity of the Soviet and Communist bloc arms flow increase, reflecting delivery decisions taken several months earlier, but the nature of the weaponry escalated as well, with quantities of large mortars and several armored vehicles showing up inside Angola by May.” *Ibid.*, 175.

airlift and sealift began transporting arms and equipment to the Congo (Brazzaville) for transshipment to the MPLA inside Angola.⁴³³ Although the exact amounts and types of arms and equipment delivered to the MPLA during the first half of 1975 were not precisely known, administration officials claimed they were substantial, especially in comparison to the small sum of political funds that the Forty Committee had approved in January 1975 for the FNLA. As noted by Schaufele, “We estimate that from the first 6 months of last year, the U.S.S.R. shipped over a hundred million dollars worth of arms and equipment into Angola in support of the MPLA. As you can imagine, the military

⁴³³ At the time of the Clark hearings, the December timeframe for the Soviet decision to increase its arms support was not definitively known. However, the Ford Administration estimated that the Kremlin probably made its decision sometime prior to the American decision on 22 January 1975, based on the time it would require to organize, prepare, schedule and deliver the arms by both aircraft and ships. On 26 January 1976, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, William Schaufele, testified, “It is noteworthy that violence broke out in Luanda in March after large shipments of Soviet arms, thousands of infantry weapons, machine guns and bazookas began to arrive there for the MPLA. The U.S.S.R. must have begun to assemble and ship this equipment as early as January, the moment when the Alvor accord was put into effect.” Congress, House of Representatives, *Unites States Policy on Angola*, January 26, 1976, 3. On February 6, before the Senate’s Subcommittee on Africa, he would state that the first new deliveries of Soviet arms, which began in March 1975, “reflected a delivery decision of several months earlier.” Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1975, 175. In his memoirs, Kissinger wrote, “We know now from Soviet documents that the Soviet plan to arm the MPLA in a major way had been decided in December 1974, two months before” (the January 22nd decision of the Forty Committee to allocate funds to the FNLA). Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795. According to Odd Arne Westad, the December 1974 date is correct. Based upon his own research of Soviet archival material, he wrote, “Moscow in early December drew up an elaborate plan for supplying the MPLA with heavy weapons and large amounts of ammunition, using Congo as the point of transit.” Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 224. This assessment is also supported by Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, who in their own reading of leaked KGB documents, wrote, “In December 1974 the Politburo approved proposals to supply the MPLA with heavy weapons and ammunition through Congo (Brazzaville).” Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 450. Many historians have criticized the veracity of this study, which is allegedly based on KGB archival materials. However, in this instance, the authors’ account tracks with Westad’s own widely respected research.

situation of the FNLA and particularly UNITA forces became increasingly desperate last summer in the face of massive Soviet arms shipments.”⁴³⁴

President Kaunda Visits Washington

On April 19, 1975, President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia paid a visit to the White House for a meeting that had been scheduled for some time. A major discussion point of

⁴³⁴ House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, *United States Policy on Angola*, January 26, 1976, 3. In the course of my research, I could find no precise, official figures on the total amount and types of Soviet, Eastern Bloc, or other nations’ arms and equipment delivered to the MPLA during the fall of 1974 or the spring of 1975. One of the problems that administration spokesmen had in answering congressional questions on the subject was that the United States had no official representatives in the Congo (Brazzaville), the main transshipment point for weaponry destined for the MPLA in Angola proper and the Cabinda enclave. This circumstance precluded the collection of first-hand information on arms arriving by air into Brazzaville, or by sea into Pointe Noire, the Congo’s seaport. As explained by Edward Mulcahy, Schaufele’s deputy in AF, in response to a query from Senator Clark, “I think our figures are not wholly accurate insofar as the early part of Soviet assistance to MPLA was delivered to them in the form of equipment and training in the Republic of the Congo, where, as you may recall, we closed our diplomatic establishment in 1966, and has not yet reopened.” Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 182. Mr. Mulcahy further noted that the American government mainly learned about the “fairly liberal inflow” of Soviet weaponry from March to June 1975 from the Portuguese. *Ibid.*, 183. Complicating this picture even more, some arms reportedly went directly to MPLA strongholds within Angola proper, such as the alleged April chartered air delivery of 100 tons of Soviet equipment from Dar-es-Salaam (site of the OAU Liberation Committee’s entrepot for aid to southern African liberation movements) to Serpa Pinto in southern Angola, then occupied by the MPLA. While William Schaufele estimated that for the first six months of 1975, the Soviet Union shipped over 100 million dollars of arms and equipment, he gave no further details of the types of equipment delivered or the delivery schedule. In testimony, Kissinger identified the types of delivered arms as “thousands of infantry weapons, machine guns, bazookas and rockets,” and “mortars and armored vehicles.” Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 17. The issue of the amounts and types of Soviet arms deliveries, especially during the fall of 1974 and spring-early summer of 1975 is contentious still, and will be discussed further in Chapter 7. Open-source reporting on the quantitative and qualitative arms deliveries to the MPLA during the March-June 1975 timeframe are variously provided by the previously cited *New York Times* article by Leslie Gelb, “U.S., Soviet, China Reported Aiding Portugal, Angola;” Jiri Valenta, “Soviet Decisionmaking on the Intervention in Angola,” in David E. Albright, ed., *Communism in Africa* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1980), 100; “Angola after Independence: Struggle for Supremacy,” *Conflict Studies*, no. 64 (November 1975): 13-14. All three reports give essentially the same information. It should be noted that all three also included the arrival of non-Soviet ships, including one Algerian, two East German and two Yugoslav merchant vessels. Additionally, as noted above, some of the arms and equipment allegedly came from Dar-es-Salaam, not directly from the Soviet Union.

the Kaunda-Ford talks was the increasingly violent situation in Angola in the spring of 1975, fueled by the alleged Soviet arms pipeline to the MPLA. Still, the president and his chief foreign policy architect had their minds focused on developments of greater import. Kissinger wrote, “Indochina was collapsing that very month, Kurdish autonomy had just been destroyed, the Portuguese revolution was tilting ever further left, and Middle East diplomacy stood stalemated.”⁴³⁵

Concerns over these weighty events, as well as Kissinger’s avowal that neither he nor the president at that time contemplated American involvement in an emerging crisis “in a distant continent heretofore largely insulated from the Cold War,” appeared to preclude any action by the United States. Kissinger, however, contends that Kaunda convinced both him and the president that the Soviet Union was intervening in Angola through massive arms deliveries and requested that the United States act to “oppose this intrusion for the sake of Angola’s neighbors.”⁴³⁶

During the course of the meeting, Kaunda apparently also persuaded Ford and Kissinger that Jonas Savimbi of UNITA was quickly emerging as the compromise leader, remarking “We have noted that when the two opposing factions of MPLA and FNLA

⁴³⁵ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 791.

⁴³⁶ Ibid. Kissinger’s recollection of Kaunda’s visit tells us, “No major initiatives were anticipated to result from it. Yet a new policy grew quite unexpectedly out of the meeting. Kaunda persuaded Ford that Soviet arms deliveries were threatening to help the Angolan Marxist MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) seize power and that American assistance was essential to frustrate Soviet designs.” Ibid.

attack, the people run toward UNITA forces. This is a good development.”⁴³⁷ The
 Zambian president added that neither Roberto nor Neto would accept the other as the
 leader of an independent Angola. Both Kaunda and his Minister of Foreign Affairs,
 Vernon Mwaanga, spoke highly of Savimbi, with Mwaanga stating, “Savimbi is not a
 political lightweight. He has grass roots support. He put forward a formula for bringing
 the three parties together.”

Jean M. Wilkowski, the American Ambassador to Zambia, also attended the April
 meeting. She seconded Mwaanga’s high regards of the UNITA leader. Savimbi “is a very
 impressive leader and quite solid and does not strike me as being self-serving or a loner.”
 President Kaunda joined in the plaudits by informing his American host that, like
 himself, President Mobutu of Zaire and FRELIMO’s Samora Machel (of Mozambique,
 then scheduled for independence in June 1975) were equally impressed with Savimbi.

The Zambian president concluded the full-court press by reporting that Melo Antunes,
 then Portugal’s moderate foreign minister and a staunch anti-Communist, was also pro-
 Savimbi. Referring to Antunes, Kaunda noted, “He came to Zambia and told us he too
 was impressed with Savimbi. Melo Antunes said without Savimbi we would not have
 reached an accord with the liberation movements for the transition of Angola to

⁴³⁷ “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Office Call on the President,” April 19, 1975, p. 6, National Security Adviser – Memorandum of Conversation, 1973-1977, April 19, 1975 – Ford, Zambian President Kenneth D. Kaunda, Minister of Foreign Affairs Vernon Mwaanga, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.

independence.” Also, “He was worried about Neto who was supported by the Communist Party in Portugal. For this reason, Melo Antunes said he would rather support Savimbi.”⁴³⁸

The foreign lobbying effort for Savimbi, assisted by the American ambassador in Lusaka, was supported by American internal assessments of his rising political star. The CIA, which had unsuccessfully sought support for UNITA during the Forty Committee’s January deliberation over aid to both Holden Roberto and Savimbi, reported the following on the latter’s late 1974 to early 1975 activities. “During the past several months, Jonas Savimbi...has emerged as the most active and politically skillful of Angola’s three nationalist leaders.” During what the Agency described as a “whistle-stop tour” through central Angola (UNITA’s traditional Ovimbundu homeland), Savimbi impressed his audiences, including representatives from the U.S. consulate and “the notable participation of whites,” with his effective, non-ideological, non-controversial

⁴³⁸ Ibid., pp. 4-5. Kissinger would later recount that Kaunda had exaggerated some portions of his conversation with President Ford, especially his assertion that the four presidents of Zaire, Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique (Samora Machel upon its independence) were unanimously in agreement that Savimbi was the best, if not the only, option to lead an independent Angola. Still, as the former Secretary of State relates, “None of this changed the basic challenge, which was the intensity of Soviet intervention on a scale not seen in Africa for fifteen years.” Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 798.

speeches. As a result, “Savimbi reportedly is now beginning to receive sizable financial assistance from well-to-do whites in central Angola.”⁴³⁹

In the aftermath of Kaunda’s visit, both President Ford and his Secretary of State concluded that the alleged infusion of Soviet arms to the Marxist MPLA threatened to change the on-the-ground balance of forces, especially in and around Luanda, the Angolan capital city.⁴⁴⁰ Their major concern, as they both contended, was not the political participation of the MPLA in Angola – or even an all-out victory by the MPLA – as long as it came without major external support. As Kissinger frequently pointed out, the United States had recognized the post-colonial regimes of Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, both governed by left-oriented parties. “The problem...was not so much Marxism as the projection of Soviet military power into Africa. When the vocally Marxist FRELIMO took over Mozambique from Portugal, we had immediately

⁴³⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, “Staff Notes: Middle East, Africa and South Asia,” no. 0423/75, February 5, 1975, p. 3, CIA Records Search Tool, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (hereafter referred to as CREST).

⁴⁴⁰ Kissinger frequently alluded to the control of the capital city as crucial to the legitimacy and credibility of any party aspiring to govern a country. Referring to Luanda and the surrounding area as the traditional ethnic base of the MPLA, he noted, for example, “The Marxist MPLA...was strongest in the capital city of Luanda and the surrounding areas. And since control of the capital where the foreign embassies were located was symbolically important in the race for foreign recognition, the MPLA had an edge.” Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 794. In his options briefing to President Ford during a meeting of the National Security Council convened to discuss the Angolan situation, he went out of his way to emphasize the importance of the capital. “The history of Africa has shown that a nation’s only focal point is the capital, and whoever has the capital has a claim on international support. If Neto can get Luanda, and drive the others out, he will have a power base and gradually gain support of other Africans.” “Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting Concerning Soviet Arms Shipments to Rebel Forces in Angola” (Washington, D.C., June 27, 1975), p. 3 [database on-line]; available from Declassified Documents Reference System.

recognized it and began the process of establishing diplomatic relations despite its ideological coloration. We had reacted in the same manner when the post independence movement in formerly Portuguese Guinea-Bissau veered sharply to the left.”⁴⁴¹ Although both FRELIMO and the PAIGC had received some Soviet support, the two had largely carried out their successful liberation struggles without significant Communist support.

In contrast, as Kissinger claimed, it was massive, unprovoked Soviet external intervention that seemed to be turning the tide in favor of its client and portended Moscow’s domination of any future MPLA government. Both he and President Ford worried that if the United States stood by while Soviet arms determined the outcome of the intensifying military struggle for supremacy, the “fragile governments” throughout the region, for their own security and survival, might seek accommodation with the imposing threat of unchallenged Soviet power.⁴⁴²

According to Kissinger, Kaunda’s appeal for American action, coming as it did on the heels of earlier entreaties from Zaire, significantly influenced the White House’s thinking on the mounting Angolan crisis and spurred action. In late April, Kissinger set in motion several actions that would eventually lead to the president’s July decision to assist both the FNLA and UNITA in countering a militarily ascendant MPLA empowered by Soviet arms, and by at least June, allegedly assisted by Cuban trainers and advisers. He tells us

⁴⁴¹ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 794.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 798.

that he first directed that the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs to prepare an assessment of the Angolan situation, laying out and discussing all the options for an American policy in Angola. He then asked the CIA to prepare an assistance package for Savimbi.⁴⁴³

Who Did What, and When: Part Four

The final segment of the Ford Administration's official account of the reasons for the American intervention in Angola takes us from late March 1975 to the president's July 18th authorization of the CIA's covert operation, IAFEATURE. As previously discussed, in February and early March, the MPLA allegedly began attacking the FNLA. The military strikes increased in severity in late March, and then intensified more, both in violence and frequency, throughout April to June 1975 – even as Soviet arms deliveries allegedly escalated during the same time frame.

In testimony, Kissinger pointed out this *a priori* relationship. “It is no coincidence that major violence broke out in March 1975 when large shipments of Soviet arms began

⁴⁴³ Ibid. The Forty Committee considered the aid package for UNITA, prepared by the CIA and including both weapons and financial assistance, sometime during June. While the committee did not immediately recommend approval, the CIA's proposal probably became the basis for Ford's 18 July decision to assist UNITA as well as the FNLA with both money and arms. For a brief discussion of the suggested support for Savimbi prior to the president's July decision, see, “Talking Points for Secretary Kissinger, National Security Council Meeting on Angola,” June 27, 1975, p. 4., National Security Adviser, National Security Council Meeting File, 1974-1977, National Security Council Meeting, June 27, 1975, Box 2, Gerald R. Ford Library; “Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting Concerning Soviet Arms Shipments to Rebel Forces in Angola,” p. 5. In his 1999 memoirs, Kissinger wrote that the CIA recommendation for support to Savimbi came to a total of \$6 million dollars, “a paltry sum compared to the Soviet undertaking.” Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 806.

to arrive...On March 23, the first of repeated military clashes between the MPLA and FNLA occurred. They increased in frequency in April, May and June, when deliveries of Communist arms and equipment...escalated by air and sea. In May, the MPLA forced the FNLA out of the areas north and east of Luanda, and, in June, took effective control of Cabinda.”⁴⁴⁴

Havana allegedly added fuel to the already incendiary situation. According to administration officials, in late May or early June, Fidel Castro, whose regime even then was participating in secret, unofficial negotiations with the United States aimed at improving Cuban-American relations, entered the growing Angolan maelstrom by deploying a substantial Cuban military advisory group to Angola. As noted by Kissinger in Senate hearings, “If statements by Cuban leaders are to be believed, a large Cuban military training mission program began in Angola in June, and Cuban advisors were probably there before then.”⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁴ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 17.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid. There is a continuing debate over exactly when the first Cuban advisory contingent arrived. Based on his review of Cuban documents, Piero Gleijeses contends the first group, which was requested by Neto in January 1975, did not start arriving in Angola until late August; by 2 September it consisted of twenty-nine members whose primary mission was to plan for the arrival and deployment of the follow-on advisers and trainers. The latter began their deployment to Angola between 16 and 20 September, most onboard three ships. Of this later deployment, some 142 arrived in the Congo (Brazzaville) in early October with the purpose of establishing a training center in Cabinda. The remaining contingent arrived in Angola proper, also in early October. By early October, then, Gleijeses argues that there were a total of 480 advisers/trainers in Angola and Cabinda, forming what the Cubans referred to as their MMCA (Military Mission of Cuba in Angola). Although they were deployed principally to train the MPLA, they were also expected to fight alongside the Angolans, if necessary. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 254-266. Contradicting Gleijeses’ argument, but supporting the administration’s contention on the late May or early

Although the Cubans were initially labeled as Soviet proxies, or Soviet Gurkhas, as Daniel Moynihan, the American ambassador to the UN called them, new evidence has shown that the first Cuban deployment, as well as the latter arrival of combatants, was strictly a Cuban initiative. In his memoirs, Kissinger corrected this mistake by noting that although Washington thought at the time that Castro was acting as a Soviet surrogate to pay back Moscow for its support to Cuba, “Documents of the period prove this judgment to have been mistaken...Quite on his own initiative, he sent a few hundred instructors to Angola in May.”⁴⁴⁶

The administration argued that the establishment of the first Cuban Military Mission in Angola (MMCA) facilitated the MPLA’s ability to employ the delivered Soviet arms, which soon began to tip the balance on the ground in favor of the MPLA. The Popular Movement’s increasing military strength finally led it, for the first time, to attack UNITA’s small contingent in Luanda in early June. As reported by the CIA, UNITA,

June arrival of the first Cuban advisers, are various media reports that cite both Cuban and Soviet officials. Don Oberdorfer wrote that Cuban Deputy Prime, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, remarked in early January 1976 that Cuba had sent 230 advisors to Angola in the late spring of 1975. David Binder quoted Soviet officials as acknowledging, in late January 1976, “Cuban military advisers had gone to Angola last spring to train recruits of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.” Don Oberdorfer, “Cuban Intervention in Angola Intrigues World Capitals,” *Washington Post*, February 18, 1976, sec. A, p. 6; David Binder, “Kissinger Believes Cuba ‘Exports’ Revolution Again,” *New York Times*, February 5, 1976, 12. Gleijeses’ depiction of the timing and size of the MMCA, as well as the later deployments of actual combatants beginning in November 1975, is probably the most accurate accounting of Cuban involvement in Angola, given his access to Cuban documents and officials actually involved in the operation. Obviously, the Ford Administration did not have the benefit of such evidence during the time when its spokesmen were defending American involvement in Angola to both the American Congress and the public.

⁴⁴⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 786-787.

which had tried to remain outside the MPLA-FNLA struggle because of its weak military position, now fought back, contributing to the increasing level of violence.⁴⁴⁷

Precursors to the American Decision to Intervene

Even as Cuban advisers and Soviet arms began to enhance the military fortunes of the MPLA, which forced the FNLA out of Cabinda in early June, the CIA reported that Mobutu's support for the FNLA had fallen off "because of Zaire's financial difficulties." As a result, Roberto's goal of an additional 10,000 trained men ready to augment the estimated 8-10,000 already in Angola would probably not be met. The Agency concluded its assessment by noting that while Mobutu was strongly opposed to the prospect of the Soviet-supported MPLA gaining control over Luanda, his economic difficulties appeared to preclude his providing the FNLA what it needed to offset the MPLA's growing military strength.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Staff Notes: Middle East, Africa, South Asia," No. 0689/75, June 10, 1975, p. 1, CREST.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 3-4. Zaire's increasingly dire financial difficulties resulted from a variety of sources, most notably the precipitous decline in the world price of copper, its primary export, widespread corruption and economic mismanagement. The intermittent closure of the Benguela Railroad both before and during the civil war, the main artery for transporting Zaire's exports to the Atlantic Ocean seaport of Lobito, undoubtedly exacerbated Zaire's economic woes. African specialist Edouard Bustin summarized the situation thusly. "By 1975, the combined effects of declining copper prices, corruption, mismanagement and misguided economic nationalism had brought Zaire to the brink of bankruptcy. Edouard Bustin, "The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Zaire," in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 489, *International Affairs in Africa*, eds., Gerald J. Bender, Richard D. Lambert, and Allan W. Heston (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987): 72.

The month of June proved to be pivotal in the American decision-making process on Angola. By mid-month, the deteriorating situation in Angola began to seriously worry the Secretary of State, not only because of the growing MPLA advantage, especially in Luanda and its environs,⁴⁴⁹ and Zaire's declining support for the FNLA, but also because the CIA and State Department had been telling him for months that Holden Roberto's FNLA was the most militarily powerful of the three movements and needed little, if any, additional support to at least hold his own against the MPLA.⁴⁵⁰

Next door in Zaire, an alleged coup attempt against President Mobutu, both a long-time American ally in sub-Saharan Africa and the major FNLA supporter, added a new dimension and increased sense of urgency to the Angolan Matrix. According to Elise Forbes Pachter, the alleged coup was first announced in the government-controlled newspaper *Elima* on 15 June. The following day, the same newspaper provided further details, including the allegation that the United States had financed and directed the coup

⁴⁴⁹ In June, besides the MPLA's somewhat tenuous advantage in the oil-rich Cabinda enclave, the movement was also successful in expelling the FNLA from areas north and east of Luanda. This tactical victory enabled it to block the National Front's logistic supply lines into the capital from both northern Angola, where Roberto's forces were securely anchored in their traditional Bakongo ethnic region, and Zaire. This information is taken from CIA Director William Colby's overview on the military situation in Angola for the June Senior Review Group (SRG) meeting on Angola and Zaire. Central Intelligence Agency, "DCI Briefing for 19 June SRG Meeting: Angola," June 19, 1975, pp. 1-3, CREST.

⁴⁵⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 806. Kissinger expressed his growing concern about the Angolan situation to President Ford on June 6, emphatically stating, "We have to give attention to Angola. My people want to 'let the democratic process' work. That is total nonsense. There is none." "Memorandum of Conversation," June 6, 1975, p. 4 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

makers, identified only as a group of military and civilian conspirators. Mobutu's subsequent letter to *Elima's* editor partially confirmed the paper's allegation on American involvement. As noted by Pachter, "Mobutu did not name the United States except by the description a 'great foreign power' and did not accuse it of using the Zairian army, but simply paying off some officers."⁴⁵¹ On June 19, in the aftermath of the alleged coup, Mobutu declared American ambassador Dean Hinton *persona non grata* (PNG); the next day he was expelled from the country.

Elise Pachter described the American response to the Zairian allegations of American involvement and Hinton's expulsion as "benign." She also noted, "There was never any

⁴⁵¹ Elise Forbes Pachter, "Our Man in Kinshasa: U.S. Relation with Mobutu, 1970-1983; Patron-Client Relations in the International Sphere" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1987), 224, 234-235. William Colby noted in his briefing to the SRG on 19 June that the Zairian foreign minister "told Hinton there was clear evidence of US involvement in a coup plot against Mobutu," and that of the middle- and high-ranking officers arrested as part of the plot, two had received training in the United States and one was a recent military attaché in Washington. Central Intelligence Agency, "Backup for 19 June SRG Meeting," 19 June 1975, p. 1, CREST. The Zairian foreign minister's reference to "Hinton," is to the then American ambassador in Kinshasa, Dean Hinton. The DCI went on to speculate on Mobutu's motivations for his coup allegations. First, he might be trying to "erase his pro-US image" and assert his independence from the United States, which, according to some reports, he considered as an undependable ally. Secondly, Mobutu might have been over-reacting to a number of events. The CIA's director specifically made note of the following circumstances: Mobutu's decreasing ability to affect the situation in Angola and his failure in convincing the U.S. to become more involved through increased support to Holden Roberto; Zaire's stressed economic and financial state and its largely unsuccessful attempts to secure major foreign assistance; widespread unrest within the Zairian Army because of the deteriorating economic situation which may have prompted the president to manufacture a plot "to warn away potential conspirators." Ibid., pp. 2-3. Any one, or all, of the reasons mentioned by Colby could be valid. They, as well as additional motivations for Mobutu's actions, are discussed in depth in Pachter, "Our Man in Kinshasa," especially Chapter 5, "Leeway and Leverage: The Expulsion of Ambassador Hinton," 200-246.

thought of sanctions; there was not even any effort to cool relations.”⁴⁵² While her comments are apparently valid, the lack of punitive action did not obscure the fact that there was considerable consternation and uncertainty in Washington about just what the American response should be.

Sensing the gravity of the situation, Henry Kissinger was quick to convene a meeting. On June 18, two days before Hinton’s expulsion, he met with some of his closest advisers in the State Department, including Edward Mulcahy, who was the acting AF as Nathaniel Davis was then on an East African trip. The purpose of the gathering was to discuss both the Zairian situation and the equally important and related events in Angola, as part of the discussion focused on the effects that a potential deterioration of American-Zairian relations might have on the struggle for power in Angola.

Although Hinton had not yet been declared *persona non grata*, Kissinger apparently believed that the ambassador was a major part of the problem, and that he had to leave Kinshasa.⁴⁵³ Under Secretary of State Joseph Sisco and Walt Cutler, the State

⁴⁵² Pachter, “Our Man in Kinshasa,” 236. The author further explained that Zairian informants described the American reaction thusly: “The United States ‘came running.’” Ibid. American-Zairian relations had gone through similar rocky periods during the ten-year presidency of Mobutu, including the expulsion, but not official PNG, of a previous American ambassador in 1966. And, as noted by Pachter, “For those on the alert in Washington, it had not gone unnoticed that Mobutu had taken the precaution of removing his own ambassador before the events in June,” replacing him with a charge. Ibid., 234.

⁴⁵³ Department of State, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976, vol. E-6, Documents on Africa, 1973-1978*, “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Africa,” June 18, 1975, p. 1 [database on-line]; available from <http://www.State.gov>. Kissinger set the tone for the serious nature of the meeting by first telling those attending that the United States could not possibly consider breaking diplomatic relations with “a country

Department's Director for Central Africa, concurred with Kissinger's assessment, with Cutler arguing that Hinton was the proximate cause for Mobutu's coup allegations.

Referring back to January 1975 and the nomination of Nathaniel Davis as the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Cutler noted that Hinton (then having served in Kinshasa for six months) had adamantly supported the decision, despite widespread Africa opposition and Mobutu's own personal condemnation.⁴⁵⁴ Cutler opined, "That's when the well poisoning started."⁴⁵⁵

Kissinger, supported by those in attendance, decided to use former ambassador to Zaire, Sheldon Vance, accompanied by Cutler, to visit Zaire for a heart-to-heart talk with

adjoining Angola." Later, after he pronounced that Hinton had to leave the country as at least a first step in repairing the American-Zairian relationship, he further added, "we cannot ram an unacceptable ambassador down Mobutu's throat." Ibid., p. 2. Besides Kissinger and Mulcahy, those attending the meeting included Deputy Secretary of State, Robert Ingersoll, Under Secretary Joseph Sisco, and Walt Cutler, Country Director for Central Africa (as well as note taker Jerry Bremer).

⁴⁵⁴ In late January 1975, Mobutu gave a speech in Kinshasa at the annual meeting of the American-African Institute, an organization dedicated to furthering relations between Africa and the United States. According to Pachter, "The crux of the speech was Africa's surprise at Easum's 'eviction' and fear of what was signaled by the appointment of his successor, Nathaniel Davis, who had been ambassador to Chile when Allende was overthrown." Pachter, "Our Man in Kinshasa," 207. Hinton's close relationship with Davis dated back to Chile when the former headed the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in that country. Hinton, like Davis, was irrevocably, if mistakenly, linked to the successful American endeavor to undermine the Allende government. Complicating Hinton's task in Kinshasa, his marching orders from Washington, D.C. included a tough message for Mobutu to get his country's economic affairs in order. None of this sat well with the Zairian president who mostly avoided meeting with the American ambassador. This adversarial relationship contrasted with the close connection that Mobutu had enjoyed with Hinton's predecessor, Sheldon Vance. Ibid., 218. On the same subject, see Crawford Young, "The Portuguese Coup and Zaire's Southern African Policy," in *Southern Africa since the Portuguese Coup*, ed. John Seiler (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1980): 208

⁴⁵⁵ Department of State, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976*, vol. E-6, "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Africa," June 18, 1975. p. 2. In late 1975, Cutler replaced Hinton as American Ambassador in Kinshasa. In the interim between Hinton's departure and Cutler's arrival, the Deputy Chief of Mission, Lannon Walker, represented the American government in Zaire.

the Zairian president. Vance's close relationship with the latter no doubt influenced the decision. As Cutler remarked, Sheldon Vance is "an old friend and confidant of Mobutu and Mobutu still speaks highly of him."⁴⁵⁶ Kissinger made it clear that he wanted Vance and Cutler to assure Mobutu that the United States valued the Zairian-American relationship and that, like Mobutu, the United States was deeply concerned about the events in Angola.

In response to Mulcahy's previous observation that Mobutu believed the United States was against him because of his opposition to the Davis appointment and the lack of American support for Holden Roberto, for example, Kissinger commented, "I want some serious talk with Mobutu on Angola...I want to hear what he wants us to do there." Somewhat later in the meeting, he told Cutler to have frank discussions with Mobutu on the Angolan situation, and to tell Mobutu, "we're not sure what we can do, but we want to know what his views are."⁴⁵⁷ The meeting concluded shortly thereafter, but it appears from the discussion that the Secretary of State was finding it extremely difficult to determine what course the United States should pursue in Angola, but that the issue could be used to facilitate a mending of fences with Mobutu during the forthcoming Vance-Cutler trip to Kinshasa.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 2, 3.

The First Vance Trip to Zaire

On June 20, Mulcahy presented Kissinger with a memorandum detailing the terms of reference for the Vance (and Cutler) visit to Zaire, which by then had been agreed to by President Mobutu. The objectives of the trip were to restore normalcy to American-Zairian as soon as possible by rebutting the “faulty evidence” surrounding the alleged coup, to reassure Mobutu of continued American friendship, and to deter him from taking further actions against American interests in Zaire. To accomplish this, the terms of reference provided the American emissaries with guidance on the types of assistance, including security, financial, PL 480 (food aid), and USAID loans, the United States was prepared to offer to smooth the ruffled Zairian feathers.

Vance was specifically instructed to discuss Angola as part of his demarche with the Zairian president, and to listen, learn and seek out Mobutu’s views. He was further directed to “make clear our own concern regarding Angola and, if it is apparent that Mobutu’s present interests are compatible with our own, solicit his suggestions on precise ways by which the US and GOZ might cooperate to promote those interests.” Vance was to also “make clear that US policies on Angola are now under review and that his views and suggestions will constitute an important factor in the formulation of our policies.”⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁸ Department of State, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976, vol. E-6*, “Action Memorandum, Subject: Vance Mission to Zaire: Terms of Reference,” p. 2 [database on-line]; available from [http:// www.State.gov](http://www.State.gov).

Vance and Cutler departed for Kinshasa on or about June 20th and had returned to Washington, D.C. by June 27, apparently having succeeded, at least temporarily, in allaying Mobutu's coup concerns and convincing him of American friendship, good will and intentions. As directed, they had also informed Mobutu of Secretary Kissinger's personal desire in hearing his ideas about Angola.⁴⁵⁹

Some of the details of the visit (as well as the second visit in July and third in September, which are discussed in the next chapter) are available in administration papers that have been made public. Based on those documents, the following narrative is a brief summary of the discussions and results of the first Vance-Cutler visit to Zaire – a diplomatic endeavor that proved critical to President Ford's July 18 decision to intervene in the Angolan crisis.

While in Kinshasa, Vance and Cutler met at least three times Mobutu and once with Holden Roberto. Mobutu led off the first meeting with Vance on June 23 with a long description of the coup details, including his belief that both Zairians and Americans had

⁴⁵⁹ My assessment that the first trip went well is based on an American Embassy, Kinshasa, telegram received at the State Department on June 30, three days after Vance's return. The cable reported Mobutu's chief adviser, Bisengimana, as having remarked that Washington's decision to send Vance on this mission "was perfect, and that he believed things would work out well. He was referring to US-Zairian relations." In Angolan-related matters, Bisengimana "wondered why US had not shown more interest in helping African liberation movements earlier and insisted that with Soviets pouring in aid to Neto, it was now a race against the clock." The embassy further noted that Bisengimana was referring in this instance to the "urgent need for help for Holden." "American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 5888, Subject: Further Demarche by Bisengimana," 301130Z July 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState –EXDIS, Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library.

been involved. Still, he informed his diplomatic guests, and old friend Sheldon Vance, that while he could not forget this factor, he forgave the United States and had decided “to pardon, because our relations have been so very close and the US has been by far most important helper of Zaire since independence.”⁴⁶⁰

The subject then turned to Angola, which dominated the subsequent meetings. However, Zaire’s declining economic and financial situation and the American assistance Mobutu believed he needed to begin to rectify it were interwoven throughout the Angolan discussions from 23 to 25 June. This shows that the two issues were closely related, if for no other reason than the fact that Mobutu’s material support for Holden Roberto had decreased simultaneously with Zaire’s growing fiscal crisis. As Mobutu told Vance, the only support of consequence that Roberto was receiving came from Zaire and the PRC, but that “Zaire’s stock of weapons are low and money currently very scarce while Communist China is a long way off.” He added that although Roberto had fifteen thousand men in Zaire and others in Angola, they were not adequately equipped, “certainly not comparably with those of Neto.” Meanwhile, “arms and money from the Soviet Union and even Yugoslavia were pouring in for Neto through Brazzaville and directly into Angola.”

⁴⁶⁰ “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 5605, Subject: Breakfast with Mobutu,” 231550Z June 1975, p. 2, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library.

Mobutu emphasized that it would be very serious for Zaire if the Soviets controlled Angola, “as they would if Neto became the master of the country.” However, he added that it was not too late for the United States to provide assistance since independence was not scheduled until November, but that enough time to do something was running out quickly.⁴⁶¹

In the second meeting on June 24, at least as reported by Vance, the political and military situation in Angola was the sole subject of discussion. Mobutu remarked that the elections scheduled for October 31, 1975 would not resolve the Angolan crisis, but he was still confident that Holden Roberto would win the elections. Noting that Savimbi was emerging as a strong compromise candidate for the Angolan presidency, a carry-over from the previous days’ discussions, Mobutu stated that he believed Neto would not accept a Roberto electoral victory and that he would move to prevent Holden from assuming leadership. “At that point Mobutu, together with other African leaders who might join him, will step in to press for Savimbi as a compromise.”⁴⁶² Mobutu’s opinion on Savimbi, then, was essentially a reiteration of President Kaunda’s argument to President Ford and Kissinger in April that the UNITA leader was the best man to back for the presidency given the continuing deep animosity between Roberto and Neto.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

⁴⁶² “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 5644, Subject: Second Discussion with Mobutu on Angola,” 241449Z June 1975, p. 2, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library.

That evening, at the insistence of Mobutu, Vance met with Holden Roberto. Vance recalled that he had known the FNLA leader during his time in Kinshasa as the American ambassador. Their discussion was essentially a replay of the previous Vance-Mobutu talks, although Roberto, true to form, spent some time castigating Agostinho Neto of the MPLA, accusing him of continually trying to undermine the Alvor process and attempting to sabotage the scheduled elections by arming civilian MPLA supporters who created disorder throughout the country.

In contrast, he professed his own support for Alvor and the electoral process, but predicted elections would not take place unless the MPLA's aggression, fueled by the "heavy" influx of increasingly sophisticated Communist weaponry, could be checked. Roberto's main point, which sometimes got lost in his rather lengthy soliloquy, was that the situation in Angola for the FNLA, which had parity in numbers and superior training, but inferior weapons, had become "grave." He then personally appealed for American and other non-Communist support. While Vance noted that he did not specifically ask for arms, "the implication was clear...He wants military support."⁴⁶³

The third meeting with Mobutu, apparently on the 25th of June, returned to the discussion of the alleged coup. The two covered ground already gone over during the

⁴⁶³ Vance reported his talk with Roberto, which is summarized above, in "American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 5720, Subject: Meeting with Holden Roberto," 251939Z June 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library.

first meeting, that is, Mobutu was prepared to forgive but not forget what he still believed was American involvement. As Vance prepared to depart, Mobutu told him that he hoped Vance would be able to return to Kinshasa, “after the Department has had a chance to consider his recommendations regarding Angola and the temporary financial assistance he believes his government needs.”⁴⁶⁴

The Vance-Cutler team subsequently left the country. They had returned to Washington by June 27, when they, along with Ed Mulcahy representing AF (Davis had still not returned from his second African trip), briefed Henry Kissinger on their mission.⁴⁶⁵ The two advised Kissinger that Mobutu was very worried about an MPLA victory, as it would mean a Communist-dominated government along Zaire’s long border with Angola. Consequently, he had requested US assistance to defeat the MPLA and said

⁴⁶⁴ “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram, Subject: Third Meeting with Mobutu; Abortive Coup,” 251313Z June 1975, p. 4, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library.

⁴⁶⁵ Mobutu’s entreaties to the American diplomats on the financial assistance he believed he needed to steady his listing ship of state were successful. Following Vance’s first visit to Kinshasa, and shortly before he departed for his second trip on or about 18 July 1975, Kissinger approved a comprehensive economic package for Zaire, which the State Department had prepared upon his request following the Vance-Cutler debriefing. On July 19, President Ford approved the recommended \$50 million assistance program as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 76 Foreign Aid budget. “Memorandum for Brent Scowcroft, Subject: Economic Assistance to Zaire,” July 9, 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Africa – General, Zaire (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library. The memorandum noted that Kissinger “wanted to be able to equip Sheldon Vance with such an offer for his next trip to Kinshasa.” Underscoring Kissinger’s sense of urgency over the Zairian situation, when he forwarded the assistance package to Ford on July 17, he pointed out that although Vance would urge Zaire’s adoption of certain IMF-recommended reforms, “he would be authorized to provide US aid without condition.” “Memorandum for the President, Subject: Mr. Lynn’s Memo to the President Concerning a Foreign Aid Budget Amendment for Zaire – Add-on,” 17 July 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Africa – General, Zaire (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library.

he would be willing to commit some of his own forces assuming forthcoming American support.⁴⁶⁶

Having heard this, Kissinger asked Vance if the pro-Western factions could defeat the MPLA with American assistance. Vance's response was that the Zairians "think it can be done," but that it would take close advice by the United States. Vance then offered up his own opinion that that he believed the minimum American objective was to prevent an MPLA victory, but Kissinger responded that if the United States were to involve itself, "we should try to win."⁴⁶⁷

A Month of Meetings

With Angola apparently drifting toward full-scale civil war, at least in the CIA's own analysis of the situation, and American relations with Zaire seemingly coming

⁴⁶⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 805.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 805-806. It should come as no surprise that Kissinger favored a victory in Angola for the American-backed factions, given his appetite for scoring "wins" in foreign policy, especially over the Soviet Union or any left-leaning opposition, and the recent American defeat in Southeast Asia. Still, he believed that the Democratic Congress, especially the oversight committees that had to be briefed on the covert Angolan program, would not support a military approach to the conflict. The White House's perception of this congressional attitude influenced the Forty Committee's formal decision on support for Roberto and Savimbi. In its July 14 meeting, the Committee approved the CIA's covert plan, but officially ruled that the objective was to establish a balance of power on the ground as a "prelude to negotiations." Ibid., 808. Kissinger admits he disagreed with the official Forty Committee ruling on the objective, but states that he accepted it because of the congressional anti-military sentiment. "My preferred strategy was to win, as I told the two emissaries on June 27. But the eight committees of the McGovernite Congress that had to be consulted would never have approved...so we adopted a strategy to achieve a stalemate on the ground by arming Savimbi and Roberto and then going public with pressure on the Soviet Union to stop its arms supply. Ibid.

unhinged,⁴⁶⁸ on 19 June, Kissinger convened the Senior Review Group to consider both Angola and the related Zairian situation.⁴⁶⁹ The starting point for the meeting was a review of the “Response to National Security Study Memorandum 224, United States Policy toward Angola,” which had been prepared by an interagency task group headed by Nathaniel Davis and submitted to Kissinger on June 13.⁴⁷⁰

As requested in the tasking document, the finished study detailed several options. The first recommended the United States adopt a neutral stance. The second proposed an American diplomatic effort urging restraint by all parties to the conflict and encouraging Portugal to play a stronger role. The third advocated an increase in American support for

⁴⁶⁸ The CIA began an early June assessment of the Angolan situation by noting, “The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola, the principal nationalist groups in the transitional government, may be edging Angola toward civil war. The two groups have clashed repeatedly during the past two months in northern Angola, as well as in Luanda and Cabinda. The Popular Movement appears determined to establish military superiority over its long-standing rival.” Central Intelligence Agency, “Staff Notes: Middle East, Africa, South Asia,” No. 0689/75, June 10, 1975, p. 1, CREST.

⁴⁶⁹ President Nixon and Henry Kissinger, desiring to consolidate all decision making in the White House and to decrease the importance of both the State and Defense Department in the process, reorganized the Executive branch early in Nixon’s first term. The new system continued into the Ford Administration. In addition to the Forty Committee, also chaired by Kissinger, they created the National Security Council’s Senior Review Group (SRG), having decided that the full NSC would not be the principal forum for considering most foreign policy issues. According to Walter Isaacson, the SRG became Kissinger’s main source of power over the bureaucracy. Its purpose was to determine what issues should reach the president – and when. For a thorough discussion of the reorganization of the American national security apparatus during the Nixon presidency, see Isaacson, *Kissinger*, especially Chapter 10, “Kissinger’s Empire,” 183–211.

⁴⁷⁰ Upon Davis’ return from his first African trip, which lasted from 5 to 19 May and included five major states in West Africa, Kissinger had tasked Davis, via the formal National Security Study Memorandum process, with heading a National Security Council Interdepartmental Task Force on Angola. Its efforts resulted in “The Response to NSSM 224.”

the anti-MPLA factions.⁴⁷¹ However, the Secretary of State was not pleased with the results, having previously remarked, in his 18 June meeting with Sisco, Mulcahy and Cutler, that the NSSM “is so phrased that if anything is done it won’t be any agency’s fault.”⁴⁷²

Perhaps for this reason, the June 19th SRG meeting ended without any recommendations as to what course the United States should pursue on Angola. However, Kissinger, chairing the SRG in his role as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, asked a number of questions that apparently went unanswered – or perhaps only partially answered - at the meeting. As a result, he requested that the Davis task force submit a special memorandum in response to the specific inquiries. That memorandum was subsequently submitted on 25 June, and Kissinger probably used the document as input to his talking points paper for the June 27th meeting of the full National Security Council, as the wording of both documents is very similar.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ The three options are discussed in the Pike Committee Report and by Nathaniel Davis in “The Angola Decision of 1975: A Personal Memoir,” *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 1 (Fall 1978): 111-113. See also Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 408, for further discussion of the options.

⁴⁷² Department of State, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976, vol. E-6*, “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Africa,” June 18, 1975, p. 4.

⁴⁷³ Department of State, “Memorandum for Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, The White House, Subject: Special Sensitive Memorandum Regarding Response to NSSM 224: ‘United States Policy Toward Angola,’” June 25, 1975 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive. The cover sheet to the memorandum, on State Department letterhead, read, “Transmitted herewith is a special sensitive memorandum that has been prepared by the NSC/AF IG in response to questions posed by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs during the Senior Review Group meeting on June 19, 1975.” Kissinger was not the only SRG attendee whose questions went largely unanswered. Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements apparently raised the issue of the nexus between the

On June 27, the same day as the Vance-Cutler debriefing, the full National Security Council met to review the options, as outlined in the Davis task force study on American policy toward Angola. After Director of Central Intelligence William Colby's intelligence update, the president asked Kissinger for a briefing on the options. Before doing so, Kissinger first pointed out his disagreement with Colby over the significance of controlling the capital, a matter that the DCI had downplayed in his own briefing.⁴⁷⁴ Questioning Colby's assessment of the issue, Kissinger presciently observed, "The history of Africa has shown that a nation's only focal point is the capital, and whoever has the capital has a claim on international support. If Neto can get Luanda, and drive the others out, he will have a power base and gradually gain support of other Africans."⁴⁷⁵

Portuguese and Angolan political situations. On June 24, he received the answers to his June 19 inquiry in the form of a CIA memorandum. The Agency's assessment, a coordinated effort with the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research and the Defense Intelligence Agency, addressed the political alignment within the MFA insofar as it affected support for the Angolan factions, as well as the Portuguese decreasing ability, or willingness, to restore the political and military balance in Angola. Assessing the Angolan crisis from the Portuguese perspective, the CIA evaluated Jonas Savimbi as the choice of the MFA moderates over the Marxist Neto and the perceived Zairian puppet, Holden Roberto, noting that the majority, non-radical officers in the Armed Forces Movement, including President Costa Gomes and Foreign Minister Melo Antunes, favored him and believed he was more likely to deal even-handedly with the white population of Angola. Central Intelligence Agency, Office of the Director of Central Intelligence, "Memorandum for: The Senior Review Group, Subject: Portuguese Policy and Role in Angola," June 24, 1975, p. 2, CREST.

⁴⁷⁴ Colby had remarked that although the MPLA has pushed the FNLA out of some areas north and east of Luanda, in the capital itself the two factions remained in an essential standoff. He then added, "Military control of Luanda by either group would necessarily not determine control of or influence over the rest of Angola." Central Intelligence Agency, "Memorandum: DCI Briefing for June 27, 1975 NSC Meeting," p. 2 [database on-line]; available from Declassified Documents Reference System.

⁴⁷⁵ "Minutes, National Security Council Meeting," June 27, 1975, p. 3 [database on-line]; available from Declassified Documents Reference System. As previously noted, Kissinger was preoccupied with, and frequently expressed his opinion on, the importance on controlling the capital city. To drive home this

Having made his point, he then proceeded to discuss the options, but remarked that he was not in “wild agreement” with any of them. He briefed that the first option – that of neutrality – would protect the United States from international and domestic criticism and avoid a potentially risky and expensive involvement in a conflict whose outcome was probably beyond American control anyway. However, remaining neutral would work in the favor of the then-ascendant MPLA, with Neto probably gaining a dominant position in Angola, leading Zaire and other American friends in the area to question American leadership and resolve.

The second option – an all-out diplomatic effort – would have the United States approach the Soviet Union and other Communist nations in a diplomatic offensive to convince them to reduce or stop their arms shipments to the MPLA. At the same time, Washington would encourage Portugal to exert authority in Angola and to seek the help and cooperation of African states. The drawback to this option, as Kissinger presented it, was that if the United States asked the Soviets to cease their weapons support to the

point, he occasionally alluded to the Congo crisis of 1960 where, he alleged, the Soviet involvement in support of Patrice Lumumba was unsuccessful because “we” controlled the capital. The Angolan-Congo analogy stretches the point, but his concern was not misplaced in the case of Angola. The battle for Luanda became the Angolan war’s center of gravity as Independence Day, November 11, approached. With the MPLA still entrenched in the capital and its environs, the pro-Western movements attempted to execute a pincer movement on Luanda, with the FNLA, supported by regular Zairian army elements, moving towards the capital from the north, and a South African-UNITA-FNLA (Chipenda) force advancing from the south. The MPLA, with the help of the Cubans, was able to repel the attacks. On November 11, Agostinho Neto declared the independence of the People’s Republic of Angola. Official recognition of the new republic by many, but certainly not all nations – the United States included – followed soon after.

MPLA, “it will be a sign of weakness; for us to police it is next to impossible, and we would be bound to do nothing.”

Kissinger finished his briefing with option three – active support of the FNLA and UNITA. He cautioned that this option involved considerable risk, would have to be conducted covertly through third parties, and that the Soviet Union would enjoy escalation advantages. However he touted the option as an occasion to “check the momentum” of the MPLA and reinvigorate the pro-Western factions, while at the same time revalidating American credibility. “Playing an active role would demonstrate that events in Southeast Asia have not lessened our determination to protect our interests to preempt the probable loss to Communism of a key developing country at a time of great uncertainty over our will and determination to remain the preeminent leader and defender of the West.”⁴⁷⁶

Following the Kissinger options presentation, President Ford specifically asked if there was a detailed proposal for arms support. He then remarked that he was not prepared to make a decision at the time, but that he wanted to see such a proposal – soon. Kissinger then told the president that the Forty Committee had considered an arms

⁴⁷⁶ “Talking Points for Secretary Kissinger, National Security Council Meeting on Angola,” June 27, 1975, p. 3, National Security Adviser, National Security Council Meeting File, 1974-1977, NSC Meeting, June 27, 1975, Box 2, Gerald R. Ford Library. See also “Meeting of the National Security Council,” pp. 3-6, National Security Adviser, National Security Council Meeting File, 1974-1977, NSC Meeting, June 27, 1975, Box 2, Gerald R. Ford Library.

package, in addition to the January 1975 approval of the \$300,000 to Holden Roberto, and that now he recommended a working group undertake “a more systematic study of this option” for the president’s consideration. After some further discussion, President Ford directed Colby to prepare another paper specifically related to arms assistance options, as well as other considerations, such as the role Zaire could play.⁴⁷⁷ The meeting adjourned on this note. While the president had made no decision yet on just what the United States should do about Angola, the wheels of the foreign policy bureaucracy, now greased by the president’s directive and an increased sense of urgency, began to turn more quickly.

Decision Day

Nathaniel Davis noted that upon his return from his east African trip on June 29, “the Angola issue was moving toward decision.”⁴⁷⁸ That decision – still nearly three weeks away – was probably influenced in part by the breakdown of yet another endeavor at reconciling the competing factions and the intensified violence that ensued. This latest attempt, largely brokered by Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta in Nakuru, Kenya, from

⁴⁷⁷ “Meeting of the National Security Council,” p. 7.

⁴⁷⁸ Davis, “The Angola Decision of 1975,” 11.

15 to 22 June, essentially recommitted the three movements to the provisions of the Alvor accord.⁴⁷⁹

By early July, however, after a brief but tense lull in violence following the signing of the Nakuru agreement, fighting once again broke out, only this time with disastrous results for the pro-Western factions. As Kissinger testified, “On July 8 all-out civil war began when the MPLA attacked the FNLA and UNITA, driving both organizations out of Luanda, and thereby ending the short-lived coalition government. By mid-July, the military situation radically favored the MPLA.”⁴⁸⁰

Given the substantially changed military and political situation in Angola, the Forty Committee met on July 14th to consider the options paper the CIA had prepared, ostensibly with other departments’ input, and pursuant to President’s Ford’s directive during the late June NSC meeting. IAFEATURE’s chief, John Stockwell, has detailed

⁴⁷⁹ According to journalist Andrew Torchia of the *Washington Post*, the three movements declared, “they will stop fighting, free prisoners, disarm civilians and demobilize their troops so that the Portuguese colony may peacefully become independent in November... Roberto said all three guerrilla leaders were convinced the agreement today would return peace to Angola.” Andrew Torchia, “Angolan Rivals Set Pact,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 1975, 1.

⁴⁸⁰ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 17. In the Secretary of State’s weekly staff meeting on July 14, following the MPLA’s ouster of the other two movements from Luanda, Kissinger once again lamented the “loss” of the capital. Nathaniel Davis gave the secretary a brief update on the situation in the capital and the FNLA’s “ineffective” counteraction to the expulsion, to which Kissinger responded, “Well, that means the MPLA is going to control Luanda... After I was told for six months that Holden Roberto was in great shape.” Davis, apparently trying to put a positive spin on the deteriorating position of the FNLA, noted that Robert still “has strength in the north, and that essentially is not destroyed.” Kissinger then reiterated his point that only those holding the capital had any claim to legitimacy. “Minutes, Secretary’s Staff Meeting; Attached to Decision Summary,” July 14, 1975, pp. 42-43 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

the four options put forth in the CIA paper. The first proposed limited financial support, along the lines of the January allocation, for political purposes. Up to July, Stockwell states that Holden Roberto had received \$265,000 of the original \$300,000. The second option involved substantial financial support and covert action, at a cost of \$6 million, intended to redress the military imbalance. The third called for a significant increase in both financial and material support – a total of \$14 million – for both the FNLA and UNITA in order to give them superiority over the MPLA, “providing the USSR did not escalate its assistance.” The final option took into account a Soviet escalation and proposed a \$40 million support package designed to support Roberto and Savimbi’s forces for one year. Regarding the fourth option, Stockwell points out, “There was no indication of how this estimate of Soviet response had been developed.” He also notes that the CIA’s study did not include the option of staying out of the conflict all together.⁴⁸¹

Nathaniel Davis was not invited to the July 14 meeting, but wrote that it adjourned without reaching any conclusions or recommendations. However, according to John Stockwell, the Forty Committee requested that the Agency develop a covert action plan for Angola based on option 2, which was the option that the CIA had recommended to the Forty Committee and the one intended to redress the military imbalance. The plan

⁴⁸¹ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 54.

was completed and submitted to the Forty Committee on July 16.⁴⁸² On that same day, Kissinger met with Nathaniel Davis to apprise him that he would be recommending that President Ford approve a \$6 million dollar assistance package. Still, he remarked that he would at the same time give the president the State Department's uncensored viewpoint, that is, their recommendation that the United States pursue a diplomatic course or remain neutral. He told Davis, however, that in his judgment the president would approve the covert plan.⁴⁸³

The next day, July 17, Kissinger presented the covert action plan to President Ford recommending, as he had told Davis he would, that the president approve it. In his discussion with Ford, Kissinger told the president, "I favor action. If the U.S. does nothing when the Soviet-supported group gains dominance, I think all the movements will draw the conclusion that they must accommodate to the Soviet Union and China. I think reluctantly we must do something." He tells us he then apprised the president of the State Department's opposition and its fears that the covert plan would leak.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸² Davis, "The Angola Decision of 1975," 116.

⁴⁸³ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 807.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 808-809. Nathaniel Davis' recollection of the July recommendation and decision point process on Angola varies slightly, but unimportantly, from both Kissinger's and Stockwell's accounts, which also differ slightly from each other. In recounting his discussion with Kissinger after Ford's approval of the covert action plan, Davis wrote that the Secretary of State assured him that he had apprised the president of the State Department's general opposition to intervention, and that he "had given the President a copy of my memorandum of July 12 to read." Davis, "The Angola Decision of 1975," 117. The July 12 memo, which had been sent to Under Secretary of State Joseph Sisco, with a copy to Kissinger, set forth in great detail the reasons for the African Bureau's opposition to covert action. As Davis explained, "In essence,

As Kissinger had correctly predicted to Davis, on July 18, President Ford approved the covert plan of \$6 million in financial and military assistance, mostly destined for the FNLA but with some support channeled to UNITA.⁴⁸⁵ Kissinger deemed this amount “paltry” in comparison to the assistance the Soviets had been providing to the MPLA. However, as he and other officials claimed, the plan was not designed to achieve a military victory, but rather a military stalemate.⁴⁸⁶ The logic of this proceeded as

the memo argued that covert intervention would not serve larger U.S. interests; that an attempted intervention could not be kept secret; and that a covert intervention would have to be so circumscribed as to fall between stools in any case – while the other side could escalate at will.” Ibid., 113. Davis resigned his position after President Ford’s decision, which came on the morning of 18 July during Kissinger’s daily briefing with the president in the oval office. Kissinger convinced Davis to stay on in the State Department, and he was subsequently nominated and approved as the American ambassador to Switzerland.

⁴⁸⁵ On July 27, President Ford authorized an increase of \$8 million to execute IAFEATURE, bringing the total July allocation to \$14 million, in essence approving the CIA option (# 3) designed to give military superiority to the pro-Western factions, provided the Soviet Union did not escalate. On August 20, he approved an additional \$10.7 million; the final allocation of \$7 million came on November 27, bringing the total to \$31.7 million, a sum very close to the CIA’s option 4, which took into account some sort of Soviet escalation. According to John Stockwell, who oversaw IAFEATURE’s implementation, the original \$6 million was shared among Mobutu, Roberto, and Savimbi, with the Zairian president getting the lion’s share to encourage him to send more arms to the FNLA and UNITA. The second allocation of funds in July - the \$8 million - was used to purchase and ship arms to Zaire and to procure airplanes to carry weapons from Zaire into Angola. The August allocation of \$10.7 million was used to buy more arms and aircraft, and for the recruitment of mercenaries and the “maintenance” of the liberation forces. The final \$7 million was allocated for more weapons and mercenaries and the “lease of a C-130 aircraft for use in Angola.” Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 206.

⁴⁸⁶ Kissinger did not prefer this option, as he later confessed. As he told Vance and Cutler in his meeting with them on June 27, his preferred strategy was to go in big and win. As previously noted, his reasoning for recommending the \$6 million “on-the-ground military stalemate” package was that the McGovernite Congress, of which eight committees had to be briefed on the operation because of the Hughes-Ryan Amendment of 1974, “would never had approved what they would have castigated as a military approach.” Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 808. The thrust of the Hughes-Ryan Amendment was to provide Congress with more oversight of CIA covert operations. It specifically prohibited such operations unless the president, in writing, deemed them to be important to the national security. It also expanded the number of committees in Congress that were to be briefed on the operation once the president had made his finding.

follows. Once the on-the-ground equilibrium has been restored, conditions would then be favorable for convincing the contending parties to reach a negotiated compromise – not unlike the provisions, and intentions, of the original Alvor agreement. At this time, with the military situation stalemated and the three liberation movements returning to the bargaining table, the United States would pressure the Soviet Union to halt its arms deliveries to the MPLA. The United States would then publicly support an OAU appeal calling for an end to all outside military assistance, thereby, as Kissinger contended, removing the Angolan crisis from the Cold War stage and “returning the issue to an African dimension.”⁴⁸⁷

Civil War in Angola

The Angolan story does not end here, in mid-summer 1975. Fed by a boost in military support from the United States and Zaire for the pro-Western factions and from the Soviet-Cuban alliance for the MPLA, the increasingly bloody civil war continued into the fall of 1975 and beyond. In October, units of the South African Defense Force, accompanied by Savimbi and Chipenda combatants, launched a full-scale blitzkrieg-style attack northward from southern Angola toward Luanda. In response, Cuba began its

At the same time, however, it worked to tie Congress' hands because it prevented any member from publicly discussing anything he or she had received in the intelligence briefing. For a discussion of the Hughes-Ryan Amendment, see Johnson, “The Unintended Consequences of Congressional Reform,” *passim*.

⁴⁸⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 808. Kissinger admitted that ascertaining at what point the military “equilibrium” was attained might be “difficult to calibrate.”

massive airlift of combatants, codenamed Operation Carlotta, even while Holden Roberto's FNLA in the north commenced its final attempt to take Luanda by Independence Day.

The MPLA and the Cubans held onto Luanda. On November 10, the Portuguese departed, having transferred sovereignty to the Angolan people and not to any one of the three contenders. In Luanda the next day, the still-ensconced MPLA declared the new People's Republic of Angola (PRA) with Agostinho Neto as president. At the time, the Popular Movement controlled only the capital and a small surrounding coastal area, a narrow strip inland to Malanje, about 200 miles east of Luanda, a few enclaves in Angola's interior, and oil-rich Cabinda.

On November 11, the FNLA-UNITA coalition declared its own Democratic Republic of Angola (DRA), with its administrative capital in the Savimbi stronghold of Nova Lisboa (now Huambo) in central Angola. Holden Roberto, however, remained in his military headquarters in Ambriz, about sixty miles north of Luanda, and Savimbi steered clear of the administrative structure established in Nova Lisboa, preferring to operate out of his own military base at Silva Porto, east of Huambo. No nation – in or out of Africa – recognized the Huambo government. In any case, The FNLA-UNITA coalition government fell apart almost immediately as the deep divisions between the two movements trumped their mutual interest of achieving at least a military stalemate with

the MPLA and of becoming part of a new tri-partite coalition government, as the Alvor agreements had originally envisioned and planned.

With Cuban assistance and increasing amounts of Soviet arms, the MPLA routed Roberto's FNLA, supported by some 1,200 Zairian troops, in the north in November and December 1975. Roberto and his movement quickly became a non-factor in Angola's future. The MPLA and Cubans then turned their efforts toward the south and the South African-UNITA-FNLA joint task force, which had halted its advance toward Luanda at Novo Redondo, about half way between Benguela and Luanda, on November 13, in the face of stiff MPLA-Cuban resistance.

Following an OAU summit meeting in early January 1976, during which half of the member nations recognized the MPLA while half remained in support of a tri-partite coalition government, South Africa began a withdrawal toward the Namibian border. As the South Africans withdrew and his military headquarters at Silva Porto came under pressure from advancing MPLA-Cuban forces, Jonas Savimbi retreated to the bush – familiar and friendly territory for the seasoned guerrilla leader – where he continued to battle the MPLA until his death in early 2002.

What Went Wrong with Angola's Decolonization

Washington's alleged objective of a negotiated return to some semblance of civility, which would permit the Angolans to determine their own future without external

interference, went unfulfilled. Numerous factors contributed to this unfortunate situation. At least part of the failure was the lack of external support and encouragement for Portugal's efforts to implement a peaceful road to independence. The United States, for example, had explicitly rejected the Davis Task Force's recommendation for a diplomatic solution. Conversely, outside military and financial backing for the three liberation movements increased even as the ink was still drying on the Alvor agreements. Lisbon no doubt hoped that Angola's decolonization process would proceed quickly and without outside interference, as had generally occurred in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. Hope is not a strategy, however. By January 31, 1975, when the transitional government, as established by the Alvor agreement, took power in Luanda, external involvement had already begun to affect the tenuous peace among the three liberation movements.

Violence broke out almost immediately in Luanda and elsewhere in northern Angola, especially between the MPLA and FNLA. As discussed above, Washington blamed the breakdown of the Alvor accord on the alleged influx of extensive Soviet arms to the MPLA in late 1974 and again in the spring of 1975. However, the United States decided, only one week after the agreement was signed, to give \$300,000 to Holden Roberto and the FNLA. This was not a "modest" amount in Third World Angola. The American assistance also came alongside continuing support from Zaire, and on the heels of Chinese support, whose trainers, advisers, and weapons package for the FNLA had begun

arriving in Kinshasa the previous spring and summer. I will discuss these issues in more detail in the following chapters. Suffice it to say here that the cumulative effect of this multi-national assistance to the FNLA had serious consequences for the Alvor agreement, despite American claims to the contrary.

If Lisbon's efforts to keep the peace during decolonization were at least partially undermined by the lack of diplomatic support, its own actions, or lack thereof, exacerbated an already tense and unstable situation. The Portuguese were either unable or unwilling to use force, as necessary, to carry out the provision of the January accord. As the agreements began to unravel in February 1975, Portugal's attempts to contain or reverse the escalating violence were half-hearted or non-existent, with the Territorial Army largely withdrawn to garrisons near the major urban centers. Lisbon wanted a quick exit out of Angola, even if it meant abandoning any semblance of authority or order in the last few months of the Portuguese presence in Angola.

The series of short-lived ceasefires throughout the spring and early summer of 1975 underscored Lisbon's declining ability to control the situation. Finally, in August, the Portuguese suspended the Alvor accord – and the transitional government with it. By that time, with foreign arms and money flowing to all three factions, the Angolan conflict had already escalated into a full-scale civil war. Lisbon's 11th hour efforts to restore Angola to a status quo ante bellum situation and to renegotiate with the three movements were

futile. They came much too late to reverse the situation. The Portuguese “decent interval” lasted until November 10, when they quietly hauled down their flag and exited Luanda under the cover of darkness.

Finally, from the start, the odds were against Lisbon’s effort to persuade the three liberation movements to politically resolve their problems. The long history of mutual suspicions, distrust and hostilities among the three did not portend well for either their desire or capacity to work together. Moreover, throughout the long years of insurgency against the Portuguese, all three had become accustomed to soliciting outside assistance. This patronage business accelerated after the April 1974 coup in Portugal and the MFA’s subsequent decision to decolonize. The three liberations movements, then, but especially the leadership of the MPLA and FNLA, also bear some responsibility for the breakdown of the Alvor accords.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have detailed the Ford Administration’s rationale and justification for the American intervention in Angola’s internal war, as well as the stated timelines and extent of that involvement – mostly in the administration’s own words. To summarize the argument on why the United States intervened, the president and his principal foreign policy advisers asserted: that the crisis was not about Angola and that more important global balance of power issues were involved; that both friends and adversaries would

view American inaction as a indicator of weakness and as a retreat from its super-power responsibilities, primarily that of maintaining an international equilibrium by demonstrating resolve in the face of Soviet-supported aggression; that to remain passive while the Soviet Union marched on, unimpeded, would have grave repercussions for American national security interests, now and in the future.

Washington's account of the timing of the American involvement can be summarized thusly. President Ford's decision in July 1975 to provide modest support to the pro-Western factions in Angola came only after months of lengthy deliberations, discussion and continuing requests from Angola's neighbors, primarily Zaire and Zambia. They were deeply concerned about their own security if Soviet arms and Cuban expeditionary forces succeeded in imposing a Marxist-Leninist regime on Angola.

Soviet arms support for the MPLA began in August 1974 and accelerated in March 1975. Cuban advisers and trainers then arrived in the late spring of 1975 to bolster the effectiveness of the Popular Movement's military capabilities. Despite these Communist-initiated and escalatory actions, the United States stayed clear of the building crisis, having allocated only a modest amount of political funding to the FNLA in January 1975. However, the massive influx of Soviet weapons tipped the military balance in favor of the MPLA, which initiated attacks first on the FNLA and later on UNITA, driving them both out of Luanda in early July and essentially destroying the

Alvor agreement. It was at this point that Washington finally decided to respond by providing moderate military support to the anti-MPLA coalition.

The American objective was to restore the military balance on the ground in order to bring the warring factions back to the negotiating table and to reestablish a tri-partite coalition government that could effectively manage a peaceful transition to independence. William Schaufele summarized the administration's argument as follows:

It is noteworthy that violence broke out in Luanda in March after large shipments of Soviet arms...began to arrive there for the MPLA. Fighting...increased in intensity in April, May, and June as massive deliveries of Communist arms and equipment ...flowed into Luanda and Congo (Brazzaville). On July 9, all-out civil war began when the MPLA drove the FNLA and UNITA forces out of Luanda thereby destroying the transitional government. As you can imagine, the military situation of the FNLA and particularly UNITA forces became increasingly desperate last summer in the face of massive Soviet arms shipments. It was this situation that the friendly African governments turned to us for assistance in preventing what they increasingly perceived as a Soviet power play to put a radical minority faction... in control of a neighboring country. It was not until July 18, more than 6 months after the Soviet Union had stepped up its military aid to the MPLA that we decided to provide military assistance to the FNLA and UNITA forces in cooperation indirectly with neighboring countries.⁴⁸⁸

Senator Clark and most of his colleagues in both the Senate and House of Representatives questioned the veracity of the official story. They ultimately decided that there were too many holes in the story to justify their approval of yet more funds for

⁴⁸⁸ House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, *United States Policy on Angola*, 3.

continuing the American involvement. Still, the Clark hearings of early 1976, as well as nearly everything claimed by the Ford Administration, have never provided any definitive answers to the real why's and wherefore's of the American intervention. The next chapters address these unanswered questions and the issues left dangling in an attempt to correct how this Cold War episode is remembered.

CHAPTER 6

AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA: WHY DID THE UNITED STATES BECOME INVOLVED?

“America’s modest direct strategic and economic interests in Angola are not the central issue. The question is whether America maintains the resolve to act responsibly as a great power.”

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger⁴⁸⁹

“Past support to Mobutu...make it equally likely that the paramount factor in the U.S. involvement is Dr. Kissinger’s desire to reward and protect African leaders in the area.”

The Pike Committee⁴⁹⁰

What follows in this and the ensuing chapter is a rebuttal to the official mythology, as recounted in Chapter 5, on why and when the United States intervened in Angola. This chapter first critically assesses the administration’s credibility argument as the reason for its decision to involve the United States in Angola. As previously discussed, Ford Administration officials asserted that to preserve international stability, the United States needed to show that it had not lost its determination or capacity to respond to Soviet-initiated aggression.

In the first part of this chapter, I argue that “credibility” was, indeed, the principal reason for the American intervention, but in a very different way than Kissinger and others overtly presented it. To Congress, the media and the court of public opinion, they

⁴⁸⁹Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 8.

⁴⁹⁰“The CIA Report the President Doesn’t Want to Read,” 85.

consistently stressed the deterrent side of credibility.⁴⁹¹ They warned that if the United States failed to respond to the alleged Soviet aggression in support of its client, the MPLA, it would encourage further adventurism by the Kremlin, increasing the chances for future, and more serious, super power confrontations.

In contrast, behind the closed doors of the State Department, the National Security Council, and the Oval Office, Kissinger emphasized the commitment side of credibility. This was particularly true as it pertained to the restoration of American leadership in the Western Alliance and the reinvigoration of the American-Chinese relationship. With this as his primary motivation, Kissinger saw Angola not only as a test of American resolve, but also, and most importantly, as an opportunity to yet again square off with the Soviet Union. Doing so would show allies and friends, not to mention the fence sitters, that the recent events in Southeast Asia had not made “a helpless giant” out of the United States.

Later in this chapter, I also examine the degree of influence of three African “friends” on the American decision to intervene. In other words, I will investigate whether or not a pericentric, or “tail wagging the dog” dynamic, as discussed in the Introduction, inadvertently drew the United States into a conflict where it had few, if any, important

⁴⁹¹ As previously noted in my introduction, Robert McMahon’s study of the issue of American credibility during the Cold War era identifies and discusses credibility’s two components: the credibility of deterrence and the credibility of commitments. As the author observed, “Just as threats need to be credible to deter potential aggressors, so too must promises be credible to reassure friends.” McMahon, “Credibility and World Power,” 455.

interests. The stridently anti-Communist, Zambia, Zaire and South Africa all supported the anti-MPLA coalition, especially the latter two, and their stakes in the outcome of the Angolan conflict were high, as will be discussed. It is possible that one or more of the three decided to take advantage of the adversarial American-Soviet global relationship to protect or advance their own localized interests through an appeal to Washington for assistance.

In the next chapter, I refute the intervention timelines as presented by Kissinger and others. Taken together, Chapters 6 and 7 reveal that the Ford Administration's account is most notable not for its veracity but for its distortion and subversion of the truth and for its blame-shifting. The apparently well-choreographed and well-rehearsed official story is still repeated and defended with slight adjustments, mainly to the timing and agency of the Cuban involvement, by members of the Ford Administration, including first and foremost former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.⁴⁹²

⁴⁹² Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*. He makes these adjustments in both Chapter 25, "Cuban Interlude," 770-790, and Chapter 26, "Civil War in Angola," 791-833.

The Chain of Mistakes⁴⁹³

The Portuguese coup of April 1974 and the MFA's subsequent decision for rapid decolonization foretold a significant change in the status quo in central and southern Africa as the Portuguese colonial buffer protecting the white minority regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa rapidly came apart. The consequences of Portuguese decolonization for southern Africa went largely unrecognized in Washington, except perhaps by a small number of dedicated Africanists in the foreign policy bureaucracy, including the erstwhile Assistant Secretary of State, Donald Easum. However, by the time of the Portuguese coup, the premises of Option Two of NSSM 39 had become entrenched in the foreign policy bureaucracy. Moreover, the related restrictions on contacts with the various liberation movements hindered a knowledgeable and objective evaluation of either the individual leaders or their ideas and plans for the post-decolonization future.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹³ Educator and author Robert E. Mittelstaedt, Jr., currently the Dean of the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University, has analyzed the consequences of "mistake chains" for the corporate world. He describes them as a sequence of flawed decision-making events that, once in place, lead to a catastrophic systems failure. His analysis of corporate decision-making is applicable to the foreign policy process. Robert E. Mittelstaedt, Jr., *Will Your Next Mistake be Fatal? Avoiding the Mistake Chain That Can Destroy Your Organization* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2005), passim.

⁴⁹⁴ In a series of briefing papers on southern Africa and Angola, as previously discussed, the State Department estimated that Lisbon's decision to decolonize "opened the door to far-reaching changes affecting the entire southern African region. Full Independence for black rule scheduled for June of next year in Mozambique, and later in Angola, will create the first breach in the cordon of friendly buffers between South Africa and black Africa." Still, the Department reported that these changes, while prompting further questions, such as, should the United States be more supportive of Portugal in its decolonization efforts in Mozambique and Angola, did not fundamentally change the American policy

Even after the restrictions were lifted in July 1974, following Portugal's decision to grant independence to its African colonies, individual and bureaucratic biases against the supposed Marxist Neto and his MPLA and in favor of the CIA's long-time client – Holden Roberto and the FNLA - impeded impartial assessments and judgments. Making matters worse, Secretary of State Kissinger rarely asked for advice or detailed analyses from his assistant secretaries on Africa. When he did, he generally ignored them, sometimes even referring to the State Department's AF as "our missionary bureau," intimating they were more concerned with nurturing and saving African souls than supporting his own real-politik, "play tough" disposition and proclivities.⁴⁹⁵

Kissinger's ignorance of Angolan events, including the political agendas of the leadership of three liberations movements, was manifestly on display during Zambian

(Option Two) in southern Africa, which "has served us well in protecting our conflicting interests in black and white Africa." *Memorandum for Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, The White House*, Subject: Issues Paper on Southern Africa, December 13, 1974, 1, 6-7.

⁴⁹⁵ In September 1975, William Hyland apprised Kissinger that Mobutu was considering sending Zairian forces into Angola after the MPLA had driven the FNLA out of Caxito, an important junction just north of Luanda. The Secretary of State, apparently approving of that action, asked Nathaniel Davis, still attending State Department meetings as the AF chief, "Is our missionary bureau going to keep its mouth shut on the subject, or are we going to advise Mobutu?" Davis responded, "We'll do our best to keep our mouth shut," to which Kissinger replied, "That would be helpful." "Minutes of the Secretary's Staff Meeting," September 11, 1975, p. 27 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts. Kissinger also condescendingly referred to the State Department officials as "pristine bureaucrats." Mark Hertsgaard, "The Secret Life of Henry Kissinger (Minutes of a 1975 Meeting with Lawrence Eagleburger)," *The Nation* 251, no. 14 (October 29, 1990); [Database on-line]; available from Expanded Academic ASAP. The phrase, "pristine bureaucrats," is taken directly from a Memorandum of Conversation detailing a December 18, 1975 meeting, "Subject: Department Policy," between Kissinger and top State Department officials concerning the Indonesian invasion of East Timor and the increasing numbers of leaks about the American involvement in Angola.

President Kenneth Kaunda's visit to Washington, D.C. in April 1975. In a telegram to the American Embassy in Lusaka, Zambia's capital, as well as other American embassies in southern Africa, Kissinger summarized his meeting with Kaunda. He reported, first, that he had told the Zambian president that the United States welcomed the independence of the Portuguese colonies, and that America would do its best to support their independence. Kissinger then told Kaunda that "we knew relatively little about such areas as Angola, where there are three different liberation movements, and this made it difficult to estimate which potential leader would be best for a stable rule."⁴⁹⁶ This statement, of course, came just three months after the Forty Committee, which he headed, had authorized \$300,000 in political assistance to the CIA's favorite son, Holden Roberto.

To make matters worse, the reporting by the American Consul General in Luanda, Tom Killoran, which spoke most favorably of the MPLA and was highly critical of both Holden Roberto's FNLA and Jonas Savimbi's UNITA, was largely dismissed in

⁴⁹⁶ "State Department Telegram, Subject: Kaunda's Meeting with Secretary (Meeting on April 19)," 1 May 1975, p. 2, National Security Adviser, Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zambia, State Department Telegrams from SecState – EXDIS, Box 8, Gerald R. Ford Library. The lack of a well-informed and rational understanding of the dynamics of the Angolan internal situation continued to hamper American decision-making throughout the summer and fall of 1975. Director of Central Intelligence Colby perhaps best exemplified this shortcoming in his testimony before the Pike Committee in late 1975. Under intense questioning from Representative Les Aspin (D-WI), Colby observed that there was not much ideological difference among the three nationalist movements. Aspin, referring to the FNLA then asked, "And why are the Chinese backing the moderate group?" Colby replied, "Because the Soviets are backing the MPLA is the simplest answer." Aspin then responded, "It sounds like that is why we are doing it." Colby's quick answer was, "It is." "The CIA Report the President Doesn't Want to Read," 88.

Washington.⁴⁹⁷ In fact, in his memoirs, *Years of Renewal*, Kissinger seemed unaware that Killoran, or an American consulate, even existed in Luanda. In discussing the three liberation movements and the notable lack of sound intelligence about each, except for the information derived from Holden Roberto via the CIA station in Kinshasa, Kissinger wrote, “The United States had no official representatives in Angola and was only episodically informed about the maneuvers of the various factions.”⁴⁹⁸

The effects of the lack of informed and impartial information and intelligence in the decision-making process on Angola were exacerbated by a propensity, especially on the part of Kissinger as he had demonstrated in the September crises of 1970, to confront the Soviet Union or its purported client states throughout the world. Whether vital American strategic or economic interests were involved or not, Mr. Kissinger defended American actions as a necessary demonstration of American determination and capability to respond globally to what he portrayed as Soviet adventurism or Communist-supported aggression.

⁴⁹⁷ Former CIA agent Robert W. Hultslander, who served as Station Chief in Luanda from early August 1975 until early November, when the American Embassy and the CIA station were evacuated, also spoke highly of the MPLA, despite the information he received on the movement at CIA headquarters prior to arriving in Luanda. As noted, “I must admit that Killoran and I were frequently at loggerheads over what I initially perceived as his MPLA bias. The briefings and orientation I received prior to arriving in Luanda emphasized the communist orientation of the MPLA, and convinced me of the urgent need to stop the MPLA from taking power...It was only after three months in Luanda, that I realized what was really happening.” Mr. Hultslander went on to explain his growing favorable assessment of the MPLA and disillusionment with both the FNLA and UNITA, citing the corrupt and unprincipled leadership of the FNLA and UNITA’s ties with the South Africans. Hultslander, “Interview with Robert W. Hultslander.”

⁴⁹⁸ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 794-795.

Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Kissinger's long-time associate and the National Security Council's expert on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, a position to which Kissinger had appointed him, captured the Secretary of State's real-politik rationale as it related to the Angolan crisis. Speaking before an audience at the 22nd Annual National Security Seminar at the U.S. Army War College in June 1976, he observed that the United States, in effect, had to be the premier globocop, even when American national security interests were not, or at least not directly, involved, as was the case in the Angolan crisis.

Sonnenfeldt criticized the lack of will and resolve shown by Congress in voting for the cutoff of funds to the FNLA and UNITA. He then remarked, "The point about Angola that I would make is that it may well be that we had no intrinsic interest in Angola as such. But I do think that once a locale, no matter how remote and unimportant for us, becomes a focal point for Soviet, and in this instance, Soviet-supported Cuban military action, the United States acquires a derivative interest which we simply cannot avoid."⁴⁹⁹

Still, the cumulative effects of the largely unbroken chain of mistakes in the Angolan decision-making process might not have resulted in the president's selection of the intervention option if not for the White House's near-paranoid fixation with the issue of American credibility in the aftermath of the defeat in Southeast Asia. Despite Kissinger's immediate post-Vietnam reflections, in which he suggested that the United States might

⁴⁹⁹ Helmut Sonnenfeldt, "American-Soviet Relations: Informal Remarks," *Parameters* 6, no. 1 (June 1976): 15-16.

have made a mistake in viewing the conflict in global rather than Vietnamese terms, President Ford's authorization of IAFEATURE demonstrated that Washington had failed to learn any lessons from that intervention.⁵⁰⁰ His decision, spurred by the pugnacious Kissinger, disastrously entangled the United States in yet another conflict, this time in a far-off land called Angola.

The Commitment Side of Credibility

In my introduction to this study, I briefly discussed historian Robert McMahon's analysis of the dual significance that American presidents and diplomats attached to the notion of credibility as it related to the exercise of power during the Cold War.⁵⁰¹ The first is related to the believability of threats in order to deter actual and potential adversaries both in the near- and long-term. Sending the right message on American resolve through decisive action in Angola applied, of course, to the United States' primary Cold War adversary, the Soviet Union. Kissinger pointed out this side of the

⁵⁰⁰ As previously discussed in note 403, page 227, Kissinger expressed these sentiments in an early May 1975 interview with NBC's Barbara Walters.

⁵⁰¹ Despite the end of the Cold War, the credibility component in American foreign policy still seems to resonate loudly. McMahon, for example, quotes Richard Nixon to illustrate the hoped-for deterrent effect of a clear-cut demonstration of American resolve. In referring to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the former president remarked, "If we fail to roll back [Saddam Hussein's] aggression – peacefully if possible, by force if necessary – no potential aggressor in the future will be deterred by warnings from the U.S. or by U.N. resolutions." McMahon, "Credibility and World Power," 455. The citation is originally from a column by William Safire in the December 14, 1990 *New York Times*. More recently, President George W. Bush, in words that former Presidents Nixon and Ford and Henry Kissinger could relate to, noted, "The consequences of failure [in Iraq] would be grievous and far reaching." President George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address," January 24, 2007.

credibility sword - the credibility of deterrence - shortly after passage of the Tunney Amendment in December 1975. Strongly advocating a continued engagement in Angola, in any possible way, he told the members of the National Security Council that the Soviet Union was throwing its weight around. The United States should not give it a free hand to do so, because, “We don’t want to whet the Soviet appetite.”⁵⁰²

The administration’s public rhetoric against Soviet actions in Angola became increasingly harsh in late 1975 and early 1976. At least part of the purpose of such open criticism was to convince the Congress and the American public that the Soviet Union’s conduct in Angola was provocative, dangerous and irresponsible, thereby justifying American actions as a necessary response. This, of course, was a persistent Cold War theme aimed at gaining support for American policies directed against the Soviet Union or its alleged client states. As such, President Ford and his chief foreign policy adviser continued the Cold War rationale of their predecessors, starting with Harry Truman and his 1947 doctrine, support for which required “scaring hell” out of the American public.

However, mostly lost in the noise of attacks against the alleged Soviet aggression in Angola was Kissinger’s mostly private emphasis on credibility’s other significance. This was the believability of American commitments and the consequences of not living up to

⁵⁰² “Minutes, National Security Council Meeting, Subject: SALT (and Angola),” December 22, 1975, p. 12. It was after this pronouncement that Kissinger advocated deploying U.S. Navy combatants off the Angolan coast, for its “psychological benefits.”

them, especially for the future of the trans-Atlantic alliance.⁵⁰³ During the long American involvement in Southeast Asia, NATO's European members had begun to exercise an independence of actions that often troubled Washington. As I will discuss shortly, the White House believed that American credibility had to be restored both to reinvigorate the alliance and to reassert Washington's leading role. Kissinger's own words demonstrate his concerns about the question of America's commitment credibility in the aftermath of Vietnam and its effects upon American-West European relations. "No serious policymaker could allow himself to succumb to the fashionable debunking of 'prestige' or 'honor' or 'credibility.' ... We could not revitalize the Atlantic Alliance if its governments were assailed by doubt about American staying power."⁵⁰⁴

His concerns over this issue also extended to the Chinese. By early 1975, Washington's diplomatic offensive toward Beijing had essentially come to a standstill. Kissinger tried to re-energize the relationship during his late November 1974 visit, following the Ford-Brezhnev Vladivostok arms agreement. However, the Chinese leadership was by then in a critical transitional period between Chairman Mao Zedong

⁵⁰³ The deterrent and commitment sides of credibility are not mutually exclusive, of course, as Robert McMahon has pointed out. "Indeed, they have often been interwoven in public debates and private deliberations about American foreign policy." McMahon, "Credibility and World Power," 456. This was true in the case of Angola. However, at least as early as December 1975, in private sessions with the president and at the State Department, Kissinger began stressing the link between the American commitment in Angola and the Western European and Chinese perception of American resolve and leadership.

⁵⁰⁴ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 228.

and Premier Zhou Enlai, both seriously ill, and their successors. As a result, the American secretary of state was unable to consult with the two leaders with whom he had built considerable rapport during his five previous visits to Beijing. Deng Xiaoping was his new sparring partner. Having been recently rehabilitated from his revisionist ways, he had neither the power nor the authority to be as open or accommodating to the American side as either Mao or Zhou.

In addition to this obstacle to effective diplomacy, the Chinese had sharply stepped up their criticism of Soviet-American détente and the American refusal to sever its formal ties with Taiwan as a prerequisite to full normalization of the Washington-Beijing relationship. Consequently, Kissinger saw China's crucial role in his triangular diplomacy as increasingly problematic, as we shall see.

For these reasons, I argue that in the wake of the American defeat in Vietnam, the White House's primary motive for its decision to intervene in Angola was to resurrect American credibility with its West European allies and with China through a display of toughness against the Soviet Union. More plainly stated, in the specific case of Angola, the commitment side of credibility trumped the deterrent side.

This emphasis, of course, does not lessen the importance the White House also attached to the deterrent component of credibility.⁵⁰⁵ The Secretary of State was noticeably distraught over the Soviet involvement in Angola, especially when it became clear that the Kremlin-backed MPLA was winning and after, from his perspective, the American Congress added insult to injury by denying further funding to the American-backed factions.⁵⁰⁶ Still, I contend that Kissinger, at least, was most concerned about how any sign of American irresolution in Angola, such as the Tunney Amendment, would play in the capitals of Western Europe and in Beijing.

American Credibility and the Atlantic Alliance

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, West Germany's Ostpolitik concerned Kissinger and President Nixon because of the fear that the two Germany's would reach an accord in which they would reunite under the flag of neutralism, thus delivering a major blow to NATO. By 1975, Helmut Schmidt, whom Kissinger admired, had

⁵⁰⁵ Credibility, as it related to an adversary's perception of American resolve and willingness to act, most notably that of the Soviet Union during the Cold War era, was the foundation of the concept of deterrence in American strategy. It was also central to what Kissinger argued was America's primary super-power responsibility: to define the limits of the Kremlin's ambitions, to foreclose opportunities for Soviet adventurism, and to block Soviet expansionism, all necessary elements in managing the emergence of the Soviet Union as a global super power and maintaining a stable international order. Kissinger's memoirs and public statements are replete with references to this side of the credibility dynamic.

⁵⁰⁶ Late in the Angolan war when the American involvement became well known and with the American-backed factions losing ground to the MPLA-Cuban forces, backed by a substantial supply of Soviet arms, Kissinger and other officials, including the president, sharply criticized not only Soviet actions in Angola, but also the actions of the American Congress in denying the Executive Branch what they claimed was the means to confront and prevent a Soviet-imposed regime in Angola.

succeeded Willie Brandt as the West German Chancellor, and Kissinger trusted him more than his predecessor.⁵⁰⁷ Because of the changed circumstances in West Germany, during the Ford presidency, Paris (and not Bonn) was almost always foremost in Mr. Kissinger's mind when he privately discussed the nexus between American credibility with its allies and the Angolan conflict.⁵⁰⁸

France, of course, had displayed maverick tendencies since at least the days of the de Gaulle government. In the mid-1960s, the French had left the military structure of NATO (but not the political organization), causing the Western Alliance to move its

⁵⁰⁷ Schmidt, a member of the West German Social Democratic Party (SPD), served as Brandt's Minister of Defense and Minister of Finance before becoming Chancellor in May 1974, following Brandt's resignation in the wake of a political scandal involving East German agents in his government. Kissinger thought highly of Schmidt because of his strong stance against the Eurocommunist parties of Western Europe and his successful attempts to improve West German-French relations through his personal relationship with French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Kissinger expressed his admiration of Schmidt to the Chinese, who also admired him, in a late September meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua in New York. After criticizing Soviet-American détente and the recently concluded Helsinki Accords, the latter remarked that Moscow's strategy to politically seduce Western Europe was "to foster the Christian Democrats...and then to encourage the Communist parties to merge with them." Kissinger responded, "Yes. This is why the Italian Christian Democrats are no barrier to the expansion of Soviet influence as they cooperate with the Communist Party. But as long as Schmidt is Chancellor in the Federal Republic, this cannot happen in Germany." He also told the foreign minister that Schmidt was a "good man" and "very strong as a leader," and that he had known the West German since 1975 when "we were both considered promising young men." "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: The Soviet Union; CSCE; Europe; Japan; Angola; Indochina; The President's China Trip; The Global Strategic Situation; Korea," September 28, 1975, p. 16 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive.

⁵⁰⁸ Despite what Kissinger described as his and Nixon's grave reservations about Chancellor Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, they eventually came to accept it because the alternative – opposing the policy – risked rupturing NATO. Kissinger believed that Brandt "had no emotional attachment to the Atlantic Alliance" and might even be committed to unraveling the postwar order in Europe. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 745. Brandt actively pursued his Eastern-oriented policy with notable successes, including a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in 1970, a West German-Polish treaty recognizing the integrity of the Oder-Neisse border, and finally, negotiations with the East Germans resulting in mutual recognition in December 1972.

headquarters from Paris to Brussels, Belgium. Despite American objections, France had also developed its own independent strategic ballistic missile force (the Force de Frappe). Added to the continuing French thorn in Washington's NATO side was Kissinger's "grave" concern about the effects of Eurocommunism on the future of the Western alliance and the status of Portugal's NATO membership as that nation moved ever leftward through successive provisional governments.

It becomes clear, then, why the Secretary of State was pleased about the Western European, and especially the French, response to the American involvement in Angola. For him, no doubt, it represented a welcome situation, as the United States had the opportunity to reassert its leadership with the Western Europeans and revive the American-French relationship. It showed the allies that despite both domestic and global distractions the United States was still ready, willing and able to carry out its super-power responsibilities. Moreover, it demonstrated that the sometimes-recalcitrant allies were willing to get back onboard with American policy, at least for the Angolan enterprise.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁹ The American-Western European effort to discredit the Portuguese Communist Party can also be viewed from the perspective of the United States, recovering from a series of external and domestic crises, reasserting its traditional leadership role in the Western Alliance. In August 1975, in an interview with *U.S. News & World Report*, President Ford denied any CIA involvement despite both Soviet and Western European aid to the factions competing for power in Portugal. "I think it's very tragic that, because of the C.I.A. investigation and all the limitations placed on us in the area of covert operation, we aren't able to participate with other Western European countries...The American people shouldn't handicap themselves from meeting the challenge, as we were handicapped in South Vietnam and as we are handicapped in trying to be a participant in Portugal." Leslie H. Gelb, "U.S., Soviet, China Reported Aiding Portugal, Angola," *New York Times*, September 25, 1975, 22. The CIA had actually been involved in Portugal, through its

This was, however, a positive step in repairing the United States' relationship with the Atlantic Alliance and the French, which had suffered during the long American engagement in South Vietnam.

President Giscard d'Estaing was a key component of the American policy in Angola because of France's military and diplomatic contributions to the effort. In referring to his discussion on the Angolan situation with Giscard while he was in Paris in mid-December 1975, Kissinger noted, "I reviewed the situation in Angola over dinner with...Giscard d'Estaing. France had a special interest in French-speaking Africa, with whose governments it maintained closer relationships and whose internal security it protected more assiduously than any other former colonial power...And Zaire, though a former

long-time association with Western European Socialist and Social Democratic parties and labor unions, since at least April 1975, although in this article Gelb reported he was told by a government source that Ford and Kissinger had made the decision in late May, "after they went to Brussels for a NATO meeting...It was after consultations with heads of state there...that they saw how strongly the West European leaders felt about maintaining a non-Communist Portugal." Ibid. Mr. Ford, of course, knew of the CIA's involvement in Portugal and had nearly blown the operation in mid-September during an interview with the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Gelb reported that a government source had told him that during the interview, the president had responded thusly to a question about the CIA and Portugal. "In Portugal, he noted 'our strong stand' along with NATO allies against a Communist government in Lisbon, then said: 'I don't think the situation required us to have a major C.I.A. involvement, which we have not had.'" The last sentence, of course, implies that the CIA was involved in Portugal, but only in a "minor way." Ibid. The point is, both President Ford and Henry Kissinger saw an opportunity not only to try to reverse Portugal's leftist trend, but also to reassert American leadership through cooperative efforts with the NATO allies. This was important in countering what they believed was a perception of the United States as "a helpless giant" in the aftermath of Watergate and Vietnam, and the ensuing malaise and neo-isolationist tendencies of both the Democratic Congress and the American public.

Belgium colony, was French speaking.”⁵¹⁰ Kissinger detailed the assistance the French government was prepared to give, including French African or Moroccan troops, French helicopters equipped with air-to-surface missiles, fighter aircraft for Zaire, and the assistance of the French intelligence services to coordinate their effort with that of the United States.⁵¹¹

⁵¹⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 822. Kissinger thought most highly of the French president. He described Giscard, as “charming, warm, and brilliant, “during their Paris dinner engagement. With obvious admiration for Giscard’s global realism, he wrote,” The heirs of Richelieu’s statecraft had no confidence in pious declarations of good will or of ‘keeping Africa out of the Cold War.’” Ibid., 823, 822. Kissinger failed to mention that the French supportive stance may have stemmed not only from their concern over the Soviet Union’s involvement in Angola, but also from the fact that the French had extensive investments in Zaire, and like Mobutu, were very interested in the future of Cabinda, where the American Gulf Oil company enjoyed a virtual monopoly. Leslie Gelb reported that Ford Administration officials told him that France involved itself in Angola, not so much to please the Americans, as to indulge Mobutu, and because of their interest in Cabinda oil. One of them noted, “The French are the only European Government with an African policy, and they have big plans for Zaire.” Leslie H. Gelb, “U.S. Aides Tell of Covert European Help to Angolans,” *New York Times*, March 10, 1976, 3. John Stockwell supports this assessment, writing that France viewed the Angolan conflict as an opportunity “to ingratiate itself with Mobutu.” Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 192. Kissinger undoubtedly surmised that the realist Giscard was looking out for French interests first when he agreed to assist the American effort. Still, it didn’t matter what the primary motivation for French support of the American policy in Angola was. It was most important that they supported it, were willing to materially contribute to the pro-Western factions, and were cooperating with, rather than opposing, the United States.

⁵¹¹ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 824. John Stockwell’s description of the actual extent of the French support considerably deflates Kissinger’s optimistic account. Also, it reveals that at least the intelligence services of the United States and France were cooperating for four months prior to Kissinger’s December meeting with Giscard. Stockwell wrote that General Vernon Walters, the Deputy CIA, met with high-level French intelligence officials in August 1975. This meeting may have included Count Alexandre de Marenches, whom Kissinger described as the “daring and imaginative chief of intelligence, “ who “Throughout the Angolan enterprise...had given invaluable advice and, on occasion, technical assistance.” Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 822. Stockwell alleges Walters promised the French \$250,000 “as proof of the United States’ good faith in Angola. The money was delivered, although it was clear to no one, possibly not even to General Walters, why the United States had to prove its good faith in Angola to the French.” Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 192. He does support the delivery of the promised military hardware, stating the French supplied anti-tank missiles, mortars and ammunition for Mobutu’s Panhard armored cars. Still, the French asked the CIA to deliver this equipment to Kinshasa from France. As

Kissinger highlighted his satisfaction with the Western European response to the American policy in Angola in several meetings with President Ford in December 1975. During that month, the situation in Angola continued to deteriorate for the pro-Western factions, despite the presence of at least 2,000 South African combatants in south and central Angola with UNITA and Daniel Chipenda's FNLA force and advisers with Holden Roberto's FNLA in the north. Further, in Washington, the Senate debate on the Tunney Amendment pointed toward a vote that would cut off further funding to the anti-MPLA coalition.

Despite these setbacks, Kissinger optimistically (at least for him) reviewed the Angolan situation with the president, within the context of the state of American-West European relations, especially the improving American-French entente. On December 18, he apprised Ford of his meeting with Giscard (on December 16), informing him of the French president's promise to provide assistance to the pro-Western factions. "He is concerned about Angola. They will recruit mercenaries, provide gunships, and put Mirages in Zaire," adding, "Your relations with Giscard are fantastic." He then reflected on the general condition of the United States' relationship with various regions of the world, but again zeroing in on Western Europe. "With Europe it is great; Angola is no

promised, they also supplied four missile-equipped helicopters, again delivered by the CIA, but none of the aircraft had pilots or ground crews. Ibid.

problem with them...The NATO meeting was terrific – they showed a degree of unity which is unprecedented.”⁵¹²

The next day, President Ford was informed of the favorable Senate vote on the Tunney Amendment while hosting a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir. Kissinger was incensed, and again voiced his belief that the Angolan conflict was not about Angola, as such, but about American credibility and leadership. He asked, “What does this do for us in the world?” Before the president had a chance to answer the apparently rhetorical question, Kissinger continued on, emphasizing the importance of American resolve in Angola to the Western alliance. “We were getting support from NATO for a policy outside Europe, for the first time.”⁵¹³

Perhaps the clearest affirmation of the importance Washington attached to a demonstration of its resolve in Angola with the condition of American leadership of the

⁵¹² “Memorandum of Conversation,” December 18, 1975, p. 1, 3 National Security Adviser – Memoranda of Conversation, 1973-1977, December 18, 1975 – Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Box 17, Gerald R. Ford Library. President Ford, too, was pleased with the French response to the American policy in Angola. In discussing the Angolan crisis in his memoirs, he specifically mentions the French, and no other Western European nation, writing, “The French agreed to work in conjunction with us.” After the Tunney Amendment vote, he singled out France yet again by noting, “The French backed off, unwilling to act alone.” Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 345. Other Western Europeans also contributed – at modest levels – to the American effort in Angola, although the French involvement, if somewhat exaggerated by Kissinger, apparently exceeded those of America’s NATO Allies, most notably the British, the West Germans and the Belgians. For a brief discussion of Western European involvement in Angola, see Leslie H. Gelb, “U.S. Aides Tell of Covert European Help to Angolans,” *New York Times*, March 10, 1976, 3, and Pat Hutton and Jonathan Bloch, “What Britain Did in Angola,” in *Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa*, ed. Ellen Ray, William Schaap, and Karl Van Meter (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1979), 236-243.

⁵¹³ “Memorandum of Conversation,” December 19, 1975, p. 3, National Security Adviser – Memoranda of Conversation, 1973-1977, December 19, 1975 – Ford, Kissinger, Golda Meir, Box 17, Gerald R. Ford Library.

Western Alliance came in Kissinger's heated discussion with the top leadership of his own State Department in December. This meeting came shortly after he and President Ford returned from an early December trip to Asia, including China and Indonesia. While in Jakarta, President Ford had agreed to the imminent Indonesian invasion of the Portuguese colony of East Timor, then mostly controlled by the leftist FRETILIN movement, including the use of American-furnished arms in the assault.⁵¹⁴ Kissinger first berated those in attendance about their disagreement with him on the Indonesian issue and the fact that they had put their reservations in a cable to him while he was still abroad, suggesting the contents would sooner or later be leaked.

He then turned the discussion to Angola and the escalating leaks on that issue.

Kissinger asked the question, probably intended for Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll, if William Schaufele (AF) had been called on the carpet and told to get his house in order. Not waiting for an answer, he continued, "This is not minor league stuff.

⁵¹⁴ The Portuguese colony of East Timor occupied nearly one-half of Timor, the eastern-most island in the Indonesian archipelago. The Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor, FRETILIN, the most successful of a number of contenders to succeed the colonial authority, was a nationalist, leftist movement which patterned itself on Mozambique's FRELIMO. Joseph Lelyveld, "Portuguese Timor Ponders Uncertain Fate," *New York Times*, October 19, 1974, 2. Mark Hertsgaard, a critic of the American Secretary of State, wrote that the Indonesian invasion occurred on December 7, 1975, just one day after President Ford and Henry Kissinger departed Jakarta. He further noted, "The Indonesians did comply with an American request to delay their attack until Air Force One was well clear of Jakarta, but they alarmed State Department officials by making extensive use of U.S.-supplied military equipment. This violated American law, which mandated that such equipment be employed only in self-defense." Mark Hertsgaard, "The Secret Life of Henry Kissinger (Minutes of a 1975 Meeting with Lawrence Eagleburger)," *The Nation* 251, no. 14 [database on-line]; available from Expanded Academic ASAP.

We are going to lose big. I go to a NATO meeting and meanwhile the Department leaks that we're worried about a [Soviet] naval base and says it's an exaggeration or aberration of Kissinger's. I don't care about the oil or the base but I do care...if the Europeans then say to themselves if they can't hold Luanda, how can they defend Europe?"⁵¹⁵

Credibility and the Washington-Beijing Relationship

Another and probably equally important detail in the credibility of commitment argument – one that can only be ascertained, again, by private discussions and not in public statements – surfaced during this same meeting. This involved the rising strains in the Sino-American relationship, and the repercussions for global stability and the new structure of peace if the Kissinger-built strategic triangle came apart.

A strong, collaborative Washington-Beijing relationship was, of course, crucial to the intricate manipulation required for an effective triangular diplomacy. Playing the “China card” had proved a reliable tactic in convincing the Soviet Union that an easing of tensions with the United States was important, especially in light of increasing Sino-Soviet tensions. Hence, Kissinger saw keeping China engaged in his triangular architecture as important leverage against the Kremlin.

⁵¹⁵ State Department, “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Department Policy,” December 18, 1975. This memorandum, in its complete form, was published in Mark Hertsgaard, “The Secret Life of Henry Kissinger.”

For these reasons, during that contentious December meeting in Washington, D.C. with his inner circle of foreign policy advisers, the architect of American foreign policy gave equal importance to the Chinese and West European perception of American credibility, which, from his viewpoint, was now being tested in Angola. Literally in the same breath as his comments on the European reaction to any sign of weakness in American staying power in the conflict, Kissinger referred to President Ford's recent conversations with Chairman Mao and Vice Premier Deng. "The president says to the Chinese that we're going to stand firm in Angola and two weeks later we get out. [Reference to the Europeans] The Chinese will say we're a country that was run out of Indochina for 50,000 men and is now being run out of Angola for less than \$50 million."⁵¹⁶

The history of Kissinger's concern over the state of the Sino-American relationship dated back to at least late 1974. As previously discussed, following the Ford-Brezhnev Vladivostok arms agreement in November, Kissinger visited Beijing where he received a cool reception from Vice Premier Deng. By that time, the American-Chinese entente had come to a near standstill. Beijing appeared to be in little hurry to move forward on the understandings and agreements of the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué, especially in light of the American reticence in the normalization process and the Chinese domestic succession

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

issue. During Kissinger's brief stay, he and Deng agreed that it would be beneficial for President Ford to visit Beijing sometime during the coming year, but they accomplished little else.

The Chinese had also become increasingly critical of Soviet-American détente and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) negotiations, which led to the 1975 Helsinki accords, publicly attacking both as appeasement of the Soviet Union. Kissinger was concerned, even sometimes indignant, about these attacks and aggressively defended the American position. In the several meetings leading up to President Ford's visit in December 1975, he parried the Chinese attacks on détente by noting that the Chinese talked a lot, but did very little in the way of action. In contrast, he argued that the United States had been very active in resisting Soviet moves. In a preparatory visit to China in October 1975, for example, he told Deng, "You believe in taking a public posture of great intransigence, though you do not necessarily act... We believe in taking a more flexible posture publicly, but we resist in any part of the world towards where the Soviet Union stretches out its hands. Therefore, in the Middle East, in Angola, in Portugal and in other places we have been quite active in order to prevent Soviet expansion."⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁷ "Memorandum of Conversation (between Vice Premier Deng and Secretary of State Kissinger)," October 20, 1975, p. 7 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, China Collection. Kissinger reported the crux of his less-than-cordial meeting with Deng to President Ford the

During the same conversation, Deng questioned the value of the Helsinki accords, which he referred to as the “European Insecurity Conference,” again attacking them as a form of appeasement of the USSR. He asked Kissinger for his assessment of the possible consequences of the agreements. Kissinger downplayed their importance. “I do not believe...It is one point where I do not agree, where our assessments are totally different. I do not agree the Helsinki Conference was a significant event. In America it has had no impact whatever...In Western Europe...it may have had some minor negative impact in a minority of countries. In France, Britain, and The Federal Republic it has had no impact....I do not think we should proclaim Soviet victories that do not exist.”⁵¹⁸

next day, noting in part that he had sharply rebutted Deng’s comparison of détente and the Helsinki accords to Chamberlain’s appeasement policy at Munich. First, he told Deng that Ford’s strategic approach to the Soviet Union was similar, if not even tougher, than Nixon’s. “In any event, both presidents, I emphasized, had no illusions about Soviet intentions and had demonstrated a consistent willingness to resist pressures when necessary. I pointedly questioned the basis of our bilateral relations with Peking if it genuinely thought that we were appeasing Moscow...I recalled the 1971 South Asian sub-continent crisis where we made some symbolic military moves in support of Pakistan while China did nothing. This was to remind Teng that while the Chinese were strong on rhetoric, we alone have been taking concrete actions vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.” “Memorandum for the President, Subject: Secretary’s talks with Chinese Officials,” October 21, 1975, pp. 3-4 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, China Collection.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., p. 15. Kissinger then characterized the American role in the Helsinki process by noting that it was “essentially passive,” an argument he had made to Deng in their earlier meeting in November 1974. Ibid. He had taken the same line with Chinese Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua in a September 1975 meeting in New York City, where the latter spoke before the UN General Assembly. That meeting laid the initial groundwork for President Ford’s visit to China. It proved to be more contentious than cordial. The discussion first focused on the Soviet Union and what both men agreed was its attempt to politically undermine the will of the Western European to resist its superficial peace overtures. Within this context, Qiao severely criticized the recently concluded Helsinki accords and the American role in the negotiations process, especially its leadership. “I would not like to mention highly controversial points...But I should mention the Helsinki Conference. We do not see why it was necessary for you to take such a step. Why didn’t you delay? I do not know why you permit them to take such a form which is of need to the Soviet

The increasing Chinese attacks on both Soviet-American and European detente concerned Kissinger, not only on their own account, but also because they were related to what he considered the most serious threat to the continued viability of the Washington-Beijing connection and thus to the effectiveness of triangular diplomacy.⁵¹⁹ This threat was the changing Chinese perception of the American role as a world leader, especially its willingness and capability to counter the hegemonic aspirations of the Soviet Union, or the “Social Imperialists,” as Mao preferred to label his Communist rival. As Kissinger

Union.” Kissinger then justified the American participation from an historical standpoint by telling the foreign minister that the CSCE negotiations had started more than ten years ago, that the United States only took part during the past three years, and that the American entry into the process was “a safety valve...for other problems.” He then told Qiao that he was overestimating the impact of the accords, and that the Soviet Union gained little if anything from them. At this point, the foreign minister turned the discussion into a lecture. He stated that he was not exaggerating the effects of the accords, noting that certain American newspaper had “almost” compared them to Munich in 1939, apparently an analogy that also matched his own perspective on the agreements, and that the Soviet Union would no doubt make good political propaganda from the results. One can deduce from Qiao’s negative assessment of Helsinki, as well as the follow-on discussion of the Eurocommunist parties, whom he noted benefited from the “illusionary” European détente created by the accords, that he viewed the American participation, as well as its leadership, as less than stellar in this instance. He suggested that the Helsinki accords helped the Soviet Union in achieving its political objective of undermining the unity of the Western Alliance, one nation at a time, and turning “the area into a Finland.” This latter pronouncement – the “Finlandization” of Western Europe – followed on the heels of Kissinger’s same remarks on the subject. So, the two diplomats agreed on this issue and also agreed that preparations should continue for the president’s visit. Other than that, there was more disagreement than accord. Moreover, Kissinger’s very on-the-defensive justification of the American role in the Helsinki process and his assessment of its effects indicate that he sensed the Chinese were unsettled not only about Helsinki, but also about the lack of strong American leadership in the process.

⁵¹⁹ Kissinger told President Ford, in preparation for his trip to China, that Beijing’s attacks on détente and the Helsinki Conference really concerned the Chinese fear that “these developments will tend to isolate them politically and strengthen their major enemy.” However, publicly, these fears were expressed as a growing propensity to characterize them both as “outright appeasement of a growing Soviet threat to the security of the US and Europe (and the PRC).” “Memorandum for the President, Subject: Your Trip to the People’s Republic of China: A Scope Analysis for Your Discussions with Chinese Leaders,” November 20, 1975, p. 2 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, China Collection.

explained to President Ford in preparation for his visit to Beijing, the Chinese appeared to be more agitated about détente than in the past because they perceived a weakening of resolve by the United States both as a result of the Communist victory in Southeast Asia and the recent upheavals in the American domestic political situation. He told the president:

There are several reasons for the current tension in our relationship with the Chinese. Probably the primary cause is a growing doubt in Peking that the United States is capable of playing the kind of major world role which will provide an effective counterweight to Moscow's efforts to project the Soviet presence abroad and to bring about a geopolitical encirclement of China. In the wake of the Communist victories in Indochina this past spring, PRC media began to express in explicit terms a concern with the 'strategic passivity' of the United States. Peking apparently believes that our domestic political situation is in such turmoil...that the United States is increasingly incapable of playing a coherent role in world affairs. To the degree that the Chinese downgrade our importance as a world power, or develop doubts about our ability to pursue our own interests abroad, they will question the significance of the relationship we have established over the past four years.⁵²⁰

As with the Western Europeans, Kissinger believed that the United States needed to provide a demonstration of American leadership and resolve in Angola for the

⁵²⁰ Ibid. Kissinger also listed the normalization question as a reason for "some" strain in Chinese-American relations. While not dismissing the issue as unimportant, he told Ford that it was clearly secondary to "strategic international considerations. These have always been the primary emphasis of our discussions in Peking. As recently as my conversation with Mao last month, he said that the big issue is the international situation and the small issue is Taiwan." Ibid., 4-5. Among the issues that Kissinger included as part of the "turmoil" of American domestic politics were: Nixon's resignation; Congress's reassertion of its own prerogatives in foreign policy, which "hobbled" the Executive Branch's options; and "the nihilistic mood of our press." Ibid., 2.

increasingly skeptical Chinese leaders. A vigorous course of action would help convince them that the United States was back in command of its global responsibilities, despite its recent setback in Southeast Asia and its own succession crisis, that it was not about to abandon its role as the leader of the anti-Soviet bloc, and that it was actively reasserting its dominant position in the Western Alliance.

The Chinese, from their own perspective, seemed to be thinking along the same lines. Prior to the Ford-Kissinger visit to China, where they arrived on December 1, the official Chinese news agency, NCNA, provided its journalistic staff with the reasons for the visit. The deputy editor-in-chief, an individual by the name of Huang, first cautioned the news reporters that no major breakthrough in Chinese-American relations was expected. He then noted, “The PRC will use the talks to increase normalization of Sino-US relations and to isolate further the ‘Soviet revisionists.’” Finally, Huang “explained that the American purpose...was to demonstrate to the Chinese that the US is the architect of Western foreign policy and retains the influence and power to lead the Western nations.”⁵²¹

Chinese doubts about the United States’ ability to fully revitalize its global leadership role following the disaster to American foreign policy in Southeast Asia the previous spring, as well as its domestic political difficulties, were of major concern both during

⁵²¹ State Department, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, *Morning Summary*, “Intelligence Summary,” p. 1, Dale Van Atta Papers, Intelligence Documents, December 3, 1975, Box 9, Gerald R. Ford Library.

Kissinger's preparatory visit to China and President Ford's subsequent trip. From Beijing, in October, he told the president that the Chinese had become increasingly suspicious of American motives, capabilities and staying power. Still, on a more positive note, he also told Ford that Beijing's worries about the Soviet Union still gave the United States great leverage in triangular diplomacy. "After all, despite all the protestations of self reliance, they feel exposed and no one but the U.S. can help provide the balance." Hence, he saw reason to believe that the Chinese would not simply "jettison" the bilateral relationship with the United States.

From that perspective, Kissinger surmised that Deng's lengthy lecture to him during his visit could be taken both as "a pep talk," intended to bolster American tenacity against the "Socialist Imperialists," and as a contrasting skepticism about American leadership and resolve. So, as he told President Ford, in the final analysis, "only actions, not words, will impress the Chinese."⁵²²

President Ford Meets the Chinese Leadership

Because of his assessment of the meeting with Deng, in his detailed pre-trip briefing paper to President Ford, Kissinger emphasized the need to project toughness toward the Soviet Union in a rebuttal of Chinese criticism that the United States was pursuing

⁵²² "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Secretary's Talks with Chinese Officials," October 21, 1975, p. 5. President Ford, no doubt, agreed with Kissinger's assessment about the importance of actions to enhancing one's credibility. During the Mayaguez incident of the previous spring, he had spoken in just such terms himself.

détente “from a position of apparent weakness rather than strength.”⁵²³ President Ford did not disappoint his Secretary of State. In his December 2 meeting with the seriously ill Chairman Mao, he used forceful language in attacking the Soviet Union. This was apparently aimed at convincing the Chinese leader that the United States was prepared to resist Soviet hegemony, not only with words but also with military actions if necessary, and that the United States would “continue to keep the pressure on them.”⁵²⁴

The next day, in his discussion with Vice Premier Deng, he reiterated his argument that the United States had been energetic in countering Soviet expansionism, pointing out that Washington had challenged Moscow in a number of cases, including the latest Cold War flashpoint – Angola – and would continue to do so.⁵²⁵ In taking the Kissinger-recommended “tough line,” including detailing specific instances where the United States had acted to counter the Soviet Union, President Ford no doubt hoped to allay Chinese concerns about American weakness.

⁵²³ “Memorandum for the President, Subject: Your Trip to the People’s Republic of China: A Scope Analysis for Your Discussions with Chinese Leaders,” p. 3. This was President Ford’s second visit to China, but first as the president. He had previously visited the country in the summer of 1972 with a congressional delegation.

⁵²⁴ “Memorandum of Conversation (between Chairman Mao and President Ford),” December 2, 1975, pp. 6-8 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, China Collection. During the meeting, Mao’s conversation was interrupted by several coughing episodes and a nurse attended to him throughout the discussions.

⁵²⁵ “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: The Soviet Union; Europe; The Middle East; South Asia; Angola,” December 3, 1975, pp. 3-5 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, China Collection.

Probably to underscore his argument that the United States had not been strategically passive, even while the Chinese had been relatively inactive, Ford shifted his polemical tactics. He asked the vice premier what the Chinese were doing, and where, to meet the Soviet threat. Not wanting to appear too argumentative, he tempered his question in such a way that it appeared to be less an accusation of Chinese passivity than an American desire to better understand and explore where the two countries could act “in parallel to counter the Soviet challenge.”⁵²⁶ Following Mao’s line on this question, Vice Premier Deng responded, “with some visible tension in his face,” that China was making its own self-reliant preparations and “firing some empty cannons,” although this latter action included encouragement to Japan and Western Europe to strengthen their relationship with the United States.⁵²⁷

After a tour d’horizon on Chinese diplomatic initiatives, the subject turned to a lengthy discussion of Angola, where in October 1975, the Chinese had terminated their training mission to the FNLA.⁵²⁸ Ford and Kissinger seemed to be fishing for a Chinese

⁵²⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵²⁷ Ibid. pp. 4-5. In his December 2 meeting with Mao, Ford had told him that the United States and China needed to coordinate their efforts against the Soviet Union in order “to achieve what is good for both of us.” The chairman replied, “We do not have much ability. We can only fire such empty cannons.”

“Memorandum of Conversation (between Chairman Mao and President Ford),” December 2, 1975, p. 2

⁵²⁸ The following is a very brief overview of the Chinese involvement with Angola’s two pro-Western liberation movements during the 1970s. In 1973, both Zairian President Mobutu and Holden Roberto visited Beijing. These two trips apparently laid the groundwork for Chinese assistance to both Zaire and the FNLA. Beijing’s support for the latter, including arms and the assignment of a military training group, began in early June 1974 when the first contingent of trainers arrived in Kinshasa. According to press

reports, they, along with over 100 Zairian elite paratroopers, were to train up to 15,000 FNLA guerrillas. China was to provide arms for two-thirds of this force (that is, 10,000 combatants), while Zaire was to equip the other 5,000. "Chinese to Help Train Angolans in Zaire," *Washington Post*, June 3, 1974, sec. A, p. 17. The article reported the entire contingent of Chinese trainers/advisers was expected to total 112, although John Marcum and others have put the number at 120 advisers. Marcum also testified before Senator Clark's early 1976 subcommittee hearings that the total arms package amounted to 400 tons, citing press reports as the basis for his estimate. Later, however, in his study of Angola and citing additional press reports, he increased the amount of arms delivered to 450 tons. See Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 4, 1976, 129, on his testimony, and Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II, *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare (1962-1976)*, 246 and note 42, 428. Together with Zairian trainers and arms, this represented a substantial investment in the FNLA. The State Department, however, attempted to downplay the Chinese assistance. In testimony on February 6, 1976, Edward Mulcahy, of AF, declared, "We are unaware that the Chinese provided very large quantities of weapons to the FNLA. They did have a military training mission." Senator Clark, having previously heard Dr. Marcum's testimony on the same subject, was dissatisfied with this assessment. The State Department then submitted a written statement which read, in part, "Between May 1974 and October 1975, a group of Chinese military instructors trained an estimated 5,000 FNLA troops and equipped them with small arms (AK-47 rifles, machine guns, rocket propelled grenades and light mortars)." The statement also noted that during the same time frame, the PRC had additionally provided "limited" quantities of arms and financial assistance to Jonas Savimbi, but did not, or could not, be more specific on the levels of Chinese aid to UNITA. Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 184-185. This Chinese aid to both, of course, began and was running full throttle during the period when the Soviet Union had ceased its support for the MPLA, which only recommenced in the fall of 1974 after an eighteen-month hiatus. Raymond Garthoff alleges that despite Beijing's initial commitment to the FNLA, as early as June 1975 they told Roberto that their support, including the training contingent, would end by the scheduled November 11 independence. He opines that the Chinese took this decision because they recognized the obvious incompetence of the FNLA, based upon the movement's inept showing against the largely out-manned and out-gunned MPLA forces in the spring of 1975, despite the nearly year's worth of Chinese training. Further, he notes, Beijing didn't want to be too closely linked with what they saw (correctly) as the FNLA's eventual defeat. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 569. In late October, after the large-scale South African invasion had begun, the Chinese withdrew all of their advisers, determined, as Garthoff wrote, "not to be associated with the side collaborating with South Africa." Ibid. On the same subject, see also Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II, *Exile politics and Guerrilla Warfare (1962-1976)*, 264-266; Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, 105, and Valenta, "Soviet Decision-Making on the Intervention in Angola," 103. Later, probably in November 1975, the Chinese did try to provide more arms to UNITA, using Tanzania as the transshipment point. Julius Nyerere, the Tanzanian president, refused to allow the weapons to pass through his territory, again as a consequence of the South African-UNITA alliance. "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: The Soviet Union; Europe; The Middle East; South Asia; Angola," December 3, 1975, pp. 20-21. Some Chinese arms apparently did reach UNITA in November 1975, but not via Tanzania. The CIA, citing a South African account, reported that a Chinese vessel had transferred cargo to trawlers off the Angolan coast and estimated that the cache was destined for UNITA; the South African reported no further deliveries. At the same time, the Agency also reported that the Chinese may have given Zaire permission to release small amounts of its own Chinese-provided weapons to the FNLA. Central Intelligence Agency,

recommitment to the pro-Western factions, especially in the area of further training. To this end, Kissinger played the French card, pointing out that the French were sending both equipment and trainers to the FNLA. President Ford then told Deng that before he left Washington he had approved an additional \$35 million for both the FNLA and UNITA, confirming, no doubt intentionally, the existence of the by-now not so covert CIA operation in Angola.⁵²⁹ Both Ford and Kissinger argued that along with the promised French assistance and increased American support, additional Chinese training could help turn the tide against the Soviet- and Cuban-supported MPLA.⁵³⁰ Ford made

National Intelligence Bulletin, December 11, 1975, "China-Angola," p. 6 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive.

⁵²⁹ The president told both Mao and Deng that he had approved the \$35 million just before departing for Beijing. He also told Deng, "that amount is on its way as I understand it." "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: The Soviet Union, Europe; The Middle East; South Asia; Angola," December 3, 1975, p. 22. In fact, as previously discussed, he had approved an additional \$28 million, and it was far from on its way. President Ford was apparently under the impression that the money would simply be reprogrammed within the Defense Department's budget and, as in the past, such action could be accomplished with the approval of only the Chairmen of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. Since conservative, "friendly" Democrats – Representative George Mahon (D-TX) and Senator John McClellan (D-AR) – headed both committees, Ford believed that his request would be routinely approved. This did not happen. As Kissinger explained, "Congress had changed dramatically since Ford left it only two years earlier...the chairmen were gunshy about exercising the discretionary authority they had previously enjoyed." Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 826. Ultimately, as we have seen, the \$28 million ran up against Senator Clark and his African Affairs subcommittee and was denied by both houses of Congress.

⁵³⁰ In his memoirs, Kissinger wrote that Giscard d'Estaing promised French arms and trainers when the two met in Paris on December 16, 1975. As previously noted, John Stockwell alleges that American-French cooperation began at least as early as August 1975 when General Walters met with representatives of the French intelligence service. But in Beijing on December 3, nearly two weeks before Kissinger's Paris meeting with the French president, he clearly told the Chinese, "We are working with France. They will send some equipment and training." "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: The Soviet Union; Europe; The Middle East; South Asia; Angola," December 3, 1975, p. 22. His statement to the Chinese at least partially confirms Stockwell's assertion of cooperation between the United States and France essentially from the earliest days of the active American involvement in the Angolan conflict. The French president's December promise of aid, as told to Kissinger, probably amounted to an increase, either qualitatively or

this escalation of the Western commitment very clear to Vice Premier Deng, as if to show that the United States was out in front on the issue and also to probably cajole, or embarrass, the Chinese into a re-involvement.

The American efforts were to no avail. The diplomatically sensitive Chinese were not about to recommit themselves to the Angolan factions now aligned with apartheid South Africa. Mao had told Ford that he was in favor of “driving the Soviet Union out” of Angola. However, Vice Premier Deng, after discussing the American urging for Chinese action in an aside with Mao, stated, “The complicating factor here is that of South Africa,

quantitatively, or both, in French support. This speculation is supported by a December message from American Charge d’Affaires Walker, in Kinshasa. He told the State Department that Mobutu’s close adviser, Bisengimana, visited Paris in early December. He returned to Kinshasa on December 8, accompanied by Giscard counselor, Journiac, “who talked with Mobutu about increased French assistance to FNLA/UNITA.” American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 101445Z December 1975, Kinshasa 10582, “Subject: Angola: Bisengimana Foresees OAU Split,” p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (3), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library. “Increased French assistance,” is, obviously, the operative phrase here. Further, Ambassador Russ, from Paris, reported on a meeting he had on December 5, 1975 with the same “Journiac.” Their discussions focused on the situation in Angola, including the South African invasion, the upcoming OAU meeting, and the increasing hostility and confrontations between Savimbi and Roberto. The meeting ended with the American ambassador stating, “I told Journiac that even in the case of South African withdrawal we are determined to continue our present common policy and hoped France intended to do the same. Journiac said indeed they would.” American Embassy Paris Telegram 051600Z January 1976, “Subject: Angola,” p. 2, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Angola – Presidential Message, Box 2, Gerald R. Ford Library. On December 5, then, the American ambassador verified a cooperative, if not collaborative, French-American effort in Angola with the words, “continue our present common policy.” The Kissinger-Giscard meeting on December 16 probably enhanced that “common policy,” but it was not the starting point for the relationship.

the involvement of South Africa. This has offended the whole of black Africa. This complicates the whole matter.”⁵³¹

Instead of agreeing to a renewed Chinese effort, Vice Premier Deng urged the United States to do more. However, as he and Mao had previously told the Americans during the meeting on December 2, the Chinese would try to use their influence to get Mozambique to cease its support for the MPLA, or at the least, as Kissinger requested, to get that nation to remain neutral in the conflict. Vice Premier Deng held out little hope for this diplomatic initiative, stating, “Yesterday I said we could try with Mozambique, but we don’t expect great results.”⁵³²

In sum, despite vigorous lobbying from both President Ford and Kissinger, the Chinese would not commit themselves to further action in Angola. On this issue, as well as others, there had been no progress and no agreement. Given this outcome, the American effort to re-energize American leadership and credibility in the eyes of the Chinese had fallen short of its objective. Despite the setback, as noted by Jussi Hanhimäki, Kissinger appeared upbeat about the trip upon his return to Washington. In a

⁵³¹ “Memorandum of Conversation (between Chairman Mao and President Ford),” December 2, 1975, p. 13. In Deng’s own talks with President Ford the next day, he restated the “problem associated with South Africa’s involvement.” He indicated to the Americans that, at least from the Chinese perspective, the South African presence inside Angola was the primary reason for the Chinese to stay out of the conflict. Kissinger then told the vice premier that the United States was prepared “to push South Africa out” once an alternative military force, probably referring to the hoped-for renewed Chinese effort and Western European support, could be established. Ibid., 19. The Chinese dismissed the idea. They had no intention of re-engaging in the conflict, which would ostensibly align them with racist South Africa.

⁵³² Ibid., 21.

December 10 meeting with a congressional delegation, he briefed that things had gone well in China and that the issue of Taiwan was not a major obstacle in the Chinese-American relationship. Rather, as he had also told President Ford in preparing for the Asian trip, the major issue was the international situation, and in this the Chinese saw eye-to-eye with the United States. He even called China “one of our best NATO allies.” Hanhimaki assesses this positive spin as “vintage Kissinger.”⁵³³

Angola and American Credibility: A Challenge and an Opportunity

The foregoing discussion of the Angola-American credibility nexus suggests, first, that not only the Soviet Union, but also, and more importantly, Western Europe and the PRC were very much on Kissinger’s mind as the Angolan conflict escalated into an international crisis. He and the president attached enormous symbolic and substantive significance to both Western European and Chinese support for the American-led anti-MPLA coalition. It bore directly on the issue of restoring American credibility, especially in the aftermath of the war in Vietnam, and, hence, on the future of the nation’s super power status and global leadership role.

Secondly, both undoubtedly saw the actions of the Soviet Union as a *challenge* to that role.⁵³⁴ At the same time, and more importantly, Angola presented itself as an

⁵³³ Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 419.

⁵³⁴ The president and Kissinger probably also saw the Soviet involvement in Angola as a challenge to détente, especially as it effected, or emboldened, domestic critics of the policy. Both, especially Kissinger,

opportunity to convince friends and allies that the United States, despite its recent international and domestic difficulties, was back in charge of the anti-Soviet coalition.⁵³⁵

This side of the credibility issue, however, was mostly invisible to the Congress, the media, and the public. For public consumption, and in an effort to manufacture an after-the-fact consensus for its own intervention, spokesmen for the Ford Administration consistently argued that it was Soviet aggression and expansionist proclivities that had caused the Angolan crisis. Further, they painted American intentions as altruistic by contending that Washington's objective was to allow the Angolans to determine their own future freely and not at the end of a Communist gun barrel.

Pericentrism

In attempting to understand why the United States became involved in Angola, the credibility argument – especially the commitment side as I have discussed – is compelling. Whether or not it represents the full explanation for the American decision

had touted détente as a means to not only manage the emergence of the Communist nation to super-power status in such a way as to avoid not only a nuclear war, but also just the type of confrontational situation then brewing in Angola.

⁵³⁵ Unlike the earlier *Mayaguez* affair, which President Ford, Kissinger, and others perceived as both a credibility challenge and opportunity, the Angolan crisis involved the main global antagonist - the Soviet Union. The opportunity to metaphorically “kill two birds with one stone,” that is, squaring off against the Russians as a means to simultaneously enhance American credibility, was a powerful magnet for the sometimes-bellicose Kissinger. Seymour Hersh addressed this important aspect of the American decision to intervene in Angola. Citing government sources who stressed Kissinger's desire to “get tough” with the Soviet Union, Hersh wrote, “A number of State Department officials and other sources expressed anger at Mr. Kissinger's decision to recommend direct United States involvement in Angola. ‘He was given the best advice there was and it didn't fit what he wanted to do,’ one official said. ‘He wanted to face off with the Russians right there – in Angola.’” Seymour M. Hersh, “Angola-Aid Issue Opening Rifts in State Department,” *New York Times*, December 14, 1975, 2.

on Angola is, however, open to question. There is evidence, which I will discuss in the following pages, that a pericentric dynamic, either in the form of President Kaunda of Zambia or President Mobutu of Zaire, played an influential role in the decision to become involved in the gathering storm that was Angola in early 1975. As quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the Pike Committee reported that the Forty Committee's January decision to give \$300,000 to Holden Roberto's FNLA came after a request from the Zairian leader. While the Committee did not evaluate the weight of the Zaire factor in the American decision to intervene, it did, if somewhat ambiguously, opine, "Dr. Kissinger's desire to reward and protect African leaders in the area," might have been a "paramount factor."⁵³⁶

Moreover, the American-South African relationship merits consideration in this discussion of pericentrism. Given the sensitivity of that relationship, however, public access to many primary sources related to the nature of the Washington-Pretoria connection during the Angolan crisis is still very limited. Most of what we know comes not from American documents, but from the South Africans themselves. As we shall see, their motives for revealing their role in Angola, as it related to the United States, are probably shaded by what they perceived as an American betrayal.

⁵³⁶ "The CIA Report the President Doesn't Want to Read," 85.

Pericentrism: The Zambian Ruse

Kissinger and others often referred to the requests for American assistance from African friends, routinely mentioning both Zaire and Zambia in the same breath. In fact, as previously discussed in Chapter 5, he has given much of the credit to Zambian President Kaunda for spurring American action on the Angolan issue. “Only on the rarest occasions does a single state visit change American national policy. Yet President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia managed to accomplish precisely that feat when he came to Washington on April 19, 1975. On that occasion, he convinced President Ford and me that the Soviet Union was intervening in Angola with military advisers and weapons and that we should oppose this intrusion for the sake of Angola’s neighbors.”⁵³⁷

There is a major problem with Kissinger’s assertion. Unless there is a still-classified, or hidden, version of the conversation between Ford and Kaunda, the declassified version does not substantiate Kissinger’s claim that Kaunda appealed for American involvement, especially not the sort of intervention that the United States eventually decided upon in July 1975. The Zambian president clearly expressed his concern over the escalating Angolan conflict and brought up the issue of Soviet support for the MPLA, all the while promoting the virtues of Jonas Savimbi as the compromise candidate. Rather than requesting active American assistance, however, he instead urged the United States to

⁵³⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 792.

take a wait-and-see position until after the scheduled October 31 elections to see if Savimbi might win.⁵³⁸

Moreover, Senator Dick Clark has strongly refuted any Zambian influence in the American decision to intervene, which supports my own assessment that President Kaunda did not ask for an active American role in Angola during his April visit. In a March 1976 interview on *Meet the Press*, about seven months after his fact-finding trip to southern Africa, Senator Clark was asked about the Ford Administration's contention that both Zambia and Zaire had requested that the United States support the anti-MPLA movements in Angola. He responded, "I am not aware that Zambia urged us to do that. I have been told, at any rate, by President Kaunda's assistant that they did not do so. I have been told by the Zambian ambassador they did not." The senator then added, "Certainly, Zaire did."⁵³⁹

I believe that Henry Kissinger and other administration spokesmen used what I refer to as the "Zambian ruse" in their efforts to convince Congress and the public that several African "friends" - and not just Zaire as the Pike Committee alleged - had urgently appealed for American intervention to preclude a Communist takeover in Angola. This

⁵³⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Office Call on the President," April 19, 1975, p. 6, National Security Adviser - Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.

⁵³⁹ "Interview with Senator Dick Clark (D-Iowa)," interview by Richard Valeriani, NBC News, *Meet the Press* (March 27, 1976), pp. 3-5, Ronald H. Nessen, *Meet the Press* - March 27, 1976, Box 71, Gerald R. Ford Library.

rather deceptive tactic would, at least outwardly, strengthen the administration's rationale for intervention, especially since Mobutu, following the alleged coup and Hinton's expulsion in June 1975, was not on Congress's most well-liked list. I also believe that American assistance to Savimibi's UNITA was, in fact, always a sideshow to the main event – American support for both Mobutu and the FNLA. The available evidence supports my position.

First, Kissinger's own words lend credence to my contention. In a mid-June 1975 meeting with President Ford, for example, in which Angola was a major point of discussion, he told the president the MPLA was gaining ground in Angola and might take Luanda. Then, "We have been diddling around. We have given Roberto a bit, but he needs weapons and discipline. Kaunda doesn't have the horsepower. Mobutu is a bloody bastard but he is the only hope."⁵⁴⁰ Secondly, Kissinger saw Zaire as the only feasible logistical base for any American support to the pro-Western factions, telling his staff that while he preferred other dinner companions to Mobutu, "he was the 'only game in town.'"⁵⁴¹ Thirdly, the American decision to actively and substantially intervene occurred only after President Sese Seko Mobutu had alleged an American, or at least CIA, involvement in the June 1975 coup against him and had expelled the American

⁵⁴⁰ "Memorandum of Conversation (between President Ford and Henry Kissinger)," June 16, 1975, p. 2, National Security Adviser – Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, June 16, 1975 – Ford, Kissinger, Box 12, Gerald R. Ford Library.

⁵⁴¹ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 803.

ambassador. This issue seriously troubled Kissinger. Despite his obvious contempt for the Zairian president, Kissinger saw him as the linch pin of American policy in southern Africa and believed that American interests in the region, especially that of denying Soviet influence, were best protected by a partnership with Mobutu's strongly anti-Communist regime.

Finally, on July 22, during his second trip to Kinshasa, which will be discussed in greater depth later on, Vance sent a message to Kissinger which stated, in part, "Since my discussions here involve assistance to Savimbi as well as Roberto, would appreciate being kept as closely informed as possible of status of our efforts via Kaunda."⁵⁴² The next day, July 23, in response to Vance's request, Kissinger sent his trusted emissary a personal telegram that reveals President Kaunda had not yet agreed to any joint American-Zambian action in Angola. This message came five days after President Ford's decision to provide financial and military support to both the FNLA and UNITA.

Kissinger informed Vance in his 23 July message that "officials" from the Lusaka embassy had approached Kaunda on the issue, apparently on July 20. However, his only response had been to ask for more information on the quantity of Soviet arms supplied to

⁵⁴² "American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram, Subject: Vance Mission: Angola," 221616Z July 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS, Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library.

the MPLA. The Zambian president also told the Americans “he would have to consult further with his colleagues before replying to us.”⁵⁴³

Subsequently, the American Embassy in Lusaka sent a message to Washington indicating that President Kaunda, via his close personal adviser, Mark Chona, had said that hard evidence on the level of Soviet involvement in Angola was an “essential pre-requisite to his response.”⁵⁴⁴ Ambassador Wilkowski (who had been present in the April meeting in Washington, D.C. between Presidents Ford and Kaunda) reported that Mr. Chona was hesitant to discuss the American proposal of assistance to Savimbi, dodging most of her questions. However, she said that he was anxious to get the full story of the American plan to Kaunda, with whom he was scheduled to meet the next day, July 24, in northern Zambia where Kaunda had traveled on July 20.⁵⁴⁵

These exchanges between Washington, Lusaka, and Kinshasa explain a good deal about the Zambian role in the American plan for Angola, which was clearly secondary to

⁵⁴³ “Secretary of State Telegram, State 173142, Subject: Vance Mission,” 230136Z July 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams from SecState – NODIS, Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library.

⁵⁴⁴ “American Embassy Lusaka Telegram, Lusaka 1372, Subject: Meeting with Chona on Approach to Kaunda,” 231532Z July 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zambia – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (1), Box 8, Gerald R. Ford Library. This message, which was sent “operational immediate,” indicating its significance, was apparently a follow-up telegram to an earlier Lusaka missive that remains classified. The earlier message, referenced as Lusaka 1361 in the 231532Z message, probably reported the initial American approach to Kaunda, on July 20, and his less than enthusiastic response, and prompted Kissinger’s personal message to Vance on July 23, in which he told Vance that the Zambian president wanted more time to consider the American proposal for joint action in Angola.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

that of Zaire and was nothing more than an add-on to the main attraction. They indicate, first, that President Ford unilaterally decided to provide American military assistance to Savimbi before President Kaunda had been consulted. Moreover, this decision ran contrary to what Kaunda had advised the American president to do - wait and see - in their April meeting. Secondly, three months after that meeting, Kaunda was still hesitant to become more militarily involved in the escalating conflict next door to Zambia. He delayed a quick decision on the American proposal by asking for more details on the amount of Soviet weaponry provided to the MPLA. Thirdly, Washington, via the Lusaka embassy, had to put on something akin to a full-court press to convince Zambia that it was in its best interests and those of its “compromise candidate,” Jonas Savimbi, to join the African “coalition of the willing,” then anchored only by Zambia’s northern neighbor, Zaire.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁶ Ambassador Wilkowski asked for, and was granted, a follow-on meeting that same afternoon, July 23, between Chona and probably the CIA Station Chief in Lusaka, whose name and position were deleted from her message to Washington. In that meeting, I surmise that the CIA man provided Chona with the details of the Agency’s estimated amount of Soviet aid to the MPLA, as Kaunda had requested. Also, since the American ambassador had told Chona that she was “completely out of the technicalities and mechanics of the assistance offer,” the CIA representative presumably briefed him on these issues also. It is difficult to assess if the arm-twisting by the Americans worked. The plan to supply Savimbi’s UNITA with American weapons did go forward, but he was supplied, like Holden Roberto, via Kinshasa and not Lusaka. Perhaps, and I speculate here, this was in deference to Kaunda’s desire not to be seen as contributing to the external escalation of an African conflict...or, maybe he never agreed to participate in the plan. Whatever the case, American (and Zairian) support to Savimbi was much lower than that to Roberto, perhaps because of the logistical difficulties involved in getting arms to him in central Angola from Zaire, but more probably because Roberto was Mobutu’s client, and Mobutu, not Kaunda, was America’s client. Also, in a pro-Western coalition “division of labor,” as we shall see, South Africa provided most of the support to Savimbi and Chipenda’s FNLA in central and southern Angola.

In sum, Kissinger and others, probably in an attempt to bolster the administration's justification for the American intervention, distorted the story of Zambia's importance to the American decision to covertly intervene in Angola, while at the same time understating the much more crucial role played by Zaire's Mobutu in that decision. That significance is revealed in the events leading up to the alleged coup against Mobutu in June of 1975, in which he implicated the United States, and the three-trip mission undertaken by Sheldon Vance to repair the potential rupture in the Washington-Kinshasa relationship.

Pericentrism: The Zaire Connection

We should view the events in Zaire surrounding the alleged coup as the culmination of an escalating series of minor crises in the relationship, beginning in the early 1970s, which sporadically interrupted the otherwise close connections between Kinshasa and Washington. These crises mainly concerned Mobutu's efforts to cast himself as a leading African statesman and as a major voice in the Third World. This required, in part, a distancing from the widely held perspective that he was an instrument of the American government, or at least its Central Intelligence Agency. In the course of asserting his independent credentials, the Zairian president undertook a regional and global diplomatic offensive. The latter most notably included visits to China in 1973 and 1974.

On his first trip to Beijing, in January 1973, Mobutu left with a Chinese pledge of \$100 million in economic aid for Zaire and weapons and training for the FNLA.⁵⁴⁷ China was slow to deliver on its \$100 million economic aid promise. However, as previously noted, in the late spring and summer of 1974, at least 112 Chinese military trainers and an estimated 450 tons of weapons arrived in Zaire for support of the FNLA. Moreover, according to historian Crawford Young, following this trip, the Chinese ambassador in Kinshasa gained continuing privileged access to the Zairian leader, which “helped to project an image of Mobutu as closer to the Third World mainstream.”⁵⁴⁸

The next bump in the Washington-Kinshasa axis came in October 1973, just a few days before the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War. While addressing the UN General Assembly on October 4, Mobutu announced that Zaire was breaking its diplomatic relations with Israel to show its support for its “brother country, Egypt.” According to Crawford Young, Kissinger was “furious,” but the United States did little in response to the Mobutu declaration.⁵⁴⁹ Historian Eduoard Bustin, assessing the impact of Mobutu’s move, noted that as nearly every other African nation followed his lead, “Zaire found itself, for the first time in its history, in the heady position of a trend setter...The break

⁵⁴⁷ Crawford Young, “The Portuguese Coup and Zaire’s Southern African Policy,” in *Southern Africa since the Portuguese Coup*, ed. John Seiler (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1980), 199.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 202.

with Israel was consonant with Mobutu's long-standing efforts to enhance his regime's visibility and to establish Zaire's credibility as an autonomous actor."⁵⁵⁰

After Mobutu's second trip to Beijing, in December 1974, he moved on to Pyongyang. As a result of this visit, the North Koreans promised, and delivered, some weaponry and extensive training for a new, special Zairian strike force, which Crawford has described as a self-contained, elite armored force, "outside the army's regular command structure." The Chinese joined in training the force, further cementing the growing Kinshasa-Beijing relationship.⁵⁵¹ The growing ties between Zaire and both China and North Korea elevated Mobutu's status within the Third World and, as importantly, in southern Africa where the Chinese had resumed a more vigorous diplomatic effort after the Cultural Revolution had run its course.

Moreover, the North Korean trip had a significant effect on Zaire's domestic policies, which could not have been to Washington's liking. Crawford Young argues that Mobutu was greatly impressed by the North Korean developmental model, which emphasized industrial growth through highly personalized leadership, a dominant single party, and regime-controlled economic expansion. Upon his return from Pyongyang, Mobutu began his personalized program of "Zairianization," in part patterned after his superficial

⁵⁵⁰ Edouard Bustin, "The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Zaire," 71.

⁵⁵¹ Young, "The Portuguese Coup and Zaire's Southern Africa Policy," 207. Young describes the United States as being irritated "over the closeness of Zairian-Chinese relations." *Ibid.*, 208.

understanding of the North Korean model, which he declared was designed to radicalize the nation's revolution.⁵⁵²

While the tilt toward economic nationalism introduced another thorny issue into the Washington-Kinshasa relationship, a series of events in the diplomatic arena significantly added to the increasing strains in the American-Zairian relationship. At the end of 1973, Sheldon Vance, who throughout his four-year assignment in Kinshasa had built a strong rapport with Mobutu, returned to the United States. Washington, probably as a sign of its displeasure with Mobutu's previous actions, left the ambassadorial post vacant until the arrival of the unwelcome Dean Hinton in August 1974.

Subsequently, Kissinger fired his popular and widely respected assistant for African Affairs, Donald Easum, upon his return from a highly praised African trip in late 1974.

⁵⁵² Ibid., 207. In carrying out his promise to radicalize the revolution in Zaire, Mobutu "announced 'a war on the bourgeoisie' and 'proclaimed a state takeover of private ventures along with what remained of the colonial business sector.'" Crawford Young, "Zaire: The Anatomy of a Failed State," in *History of Central Africa: The Contemporary Years since 1960*, ed. David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin (New York: Addison Wesley Longman: 1998), 115. In addition to major changes in the economic sector, Mobutu's Zairianization doctrine also affected the way the society was to be run, including the further empowerment of Mobutu's dominant political movement, the MPR (Popular Revolutionary Movement), which he had established in 1967. For example, as explained by Young, the government took over all mission schools, recalled all Zairian students in foreign schools, conscripted graduates of secondary school for public service, and determined admission to university based on a favorable MPR recommendation on the student's political militancy. Young, "The Portuguese Coup and Zaire's Southern African Policy," 207-208. Mobutism replaced the previous doctrine of "Authenticity," which had mandated that Zaire return to its cultural roots and reject Western influence. As a result, Zairians were instructed to rid themselves of Western clothing. Mao-style collarless jackets became the acceptable wear for men and full-length Africanized dresses for women. The regime also Africanized place names and instructed its citizens to drop their Westernized names in favor of authentic Zairian names. Young, "Zaire: The Anatomy of a Failed State," 113-114. Although Mobutism officially replaced Authenticity as the formal doctrine, the Africanization program of the latter remained in place.

He replaced Easum with Nathaniel Davis, for whom Hinton had worked while Davis was the American ambassador to Chile during the Allende years.

In January 1975, Mobutu chose the forum of the African-American Institute annual (AAI) conference, then being held in Kinshasa, to criticize Davis' appointment. He then linked the former ambassador in Santiago to the American actions against Chile's Salvador Allende and to what he described as broader American efforts at undermining Third World regimes whose ideological disposition displeased the United States. At the same time, he implicated Ambassador Hinton, then only a few months into his Kinshasa assignment, in these "schemes" as a result of his previous association with Davis in Chile.⁵⁵³

Hinton's relationship with Mobutu was, from the start, tense, and very unlike the friendship enjoyed by Sheldon Vance and the Zairian president. Adding to the unpleasantness of Hinton's situation, when he left Washington, his marching orders were to convince Mobutu to get his economic house in order or face the possibility of a

⁵⁵³ Young, "The Portuguese Coup and Zaire's Southern African Policy," 208, and Bustin, "The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Zaire," 71-72. According to journalist Bruce Oudes, Mobutu's January 21 speech was the first time a moderate African state openly criticized the United States' African policy, which, if true, clearly added to its significance. Part of Mobutu's criticism also focused on the recent dismissal of Donald Easum as the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, an American emissary who was widely respected throughout Africa. Mobutu "praised Assistant Secretary Easum as a good listener who is 'very experienced in African Affairs,' and said he was 'surprised to learn not only that he was fired but that his replacement is the former ambassador to Chile at the time President Allende died.' U.S. policy in Africa, Mobutu said, 'is a passive one. It is a policy of status quo and fait accompli.'" Bruce Oudes, "The United States' Year in Africa," *African Contemporary Record, Annual Survey and Documents, 1974-1975* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1975), A-99.

decline, or loss, of American support. As Elize Pachter noted, “Hinton’s job was to point out to Mobutu that the United States could not bail him out of his present difficulties.”⁵⁵⁴

Mobutu, however, refused to see the new Ambassador until January 1975. When the two finally met, the president did not receive either the messenger or the delivered message well. According to Pachter, Mobutu was not yet ready or willing to hear the bad news that Hinton tried to provide because in early 1975, the price of copper had not significantly decreased, and the Benguela railroad was still open. Despite warnings from the World Bank on the instability of Zaire’s economic position, the international financial community, particularly Zaire’s Western partners, ignored the nascent crisis.⁵⁵⁵ Zaire’s credit was still good in early 1975, but this situation changed radically over the next few months.

Then came the alleged coup in June 1975 and Hinton’s subsequent expulsion. Although from time to time Mobutu demonstrated his independence from the United States by taking actions that he no doubt calculated would offend Washington, he also realized that his regime played a major role in American policy in southern Africa. The United States needed him, even if it didn’t especially like him. More importantly, he needed the United States’ continued support, especially with Zaire’s deteriorating

⁵⁵⁴ Pachter, “Our Man in Kinshasa, 220.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

economic situation and the emerging crisis in Angola, where the MPLA was steadily gaining the upper hand over Mobutu's "chosen one," Holden Roberto, and his FNLA.

Given the latter situation and the somewhat symbiotic relationship between Washington and Kinshasa, Mobutu took a calculated risk. He essentially decided to shoot the messenger. With Ambassador Hinton's expulsion, Mobutu signaled that not only did he want a new and more amenable American representative in Kinshasa, but also that he wanted Washington to start paying more attention to him and his country's declining economic situation as well as his warnings about what he alleged was extensive and increasing Soviet involvement in Angola.

In this is he was remarkably successful. As Elise Pachter has observed, the American reaction to the alleged American involvement in the coup and Hinton's expulsion reassured President Mobutu that he was still indispensable to Washington's Africa policy."⁵⁵⁶ The United States imposed neither diplomatic nor other penalties in response, instead sending Mobutu's former confidante, Sheldon Vance, to placate his old friend. Vance's mission spanned four months and entailed three separate trips in June, July, and September. While not all the documents surrounding these visits are declassified, enough have been made publicly available to connect the dots and assess the significance of Mobutu in the American decision to intervene in Angola.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 204.

The Vance Mission – First Trip

During Vance's first trip in June, which began just days after Hinton's expulsion, Mobutu not only appealed for American economic support, but also began to outline the format for American assistance to the FNLA and UNITA. This happened even though Vance made no promise of American support for either movement. Mobutu, however, was not deterred by Vance's non-committal, and went into great detail on the situation in Angola. He first told Vance that he had agreed with the Portuguese to lessen his own support to Roberto while Portugal "would not go out of its way to help Agostinho Neto." He inferred that the Portuguese had not been successful in this endeavor as arms and money from the Soviet Union and others continued to pour into Angola for the MPLA. In contrast, although Roberto had 15,000 men in Zaire to augment those already in Angola, they lacked adequate weapons because his own stock, with which he supplied the FNLA, was low, his money scarce, and Chinese support dwindling.

Having lured his guest with the Soviet bait, Mobutu then set the hook. He told Vance that he realized that under the present circumstances, probably referring to the American domestic political situation including the investigations of the CIA, the United States could not help directly. However, "It is known that the US had helped Zaire militarily and that Zaire has helped Roberto, so the modalities of our possible assistance are clearly indicated." Mobutu then emphasized that it was not too late for the United States to act,

but that time was quickly running out. Sounding much like a Kissinger imitator, he told Vance it would be very “grave” for Zaire if the Soviets controlled Angola, “as they would if Neto became the master of the country.” Mobutu concluded the session on Angola by advocating strongly for Savimbi, noting that he had been able to give him only \$30,000 in cash, but that he “should also should be given arms and more money and this too can be via Zaire.” He then turned to a discussion of Zaire’s financial difficulties.⁵⁵⁷

Vance’s subsequent meetings with Mobutu during his first trip, of which there were at least two, as well as his single meeting with Holden Roberto, were essentially reiterations of that all-important first meeting. Mobutu reaffirmed his desire to continue a close association with the United States, while continuing to bombard the American emissary with the seriousness of Zaire’s economic situation and the Soviet threat next door. Phase one of the Mobutu plan for Angola had thus been set in place. Its details were yet to be worked out and its execution still contingent upon an American decision to intervene, but Mobutu’s apparently convincing arguments had two significant effects on the Zaire-American relationship and on the course of the conflict in Angola.

⁵⁵⁷ Vance’s first meeting with Mobutu, as summarized above, was reported in “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 5605, Subject: Breakfast with Mobutu,” 231550Z June 1975, pp. 1-3, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library. Subsequent messages from Vance indicate he met again with Mobutu on the evening of June 23, then again the next morning, June 24, for a total of at least three discussions. During the evening of June 24, he also met with Holden Roberto. Vance and Mobutu apparently conducted more than three sessions, but the records of those discussions are still unavailable to the public.

First, Mobutu's request for American economic assistance was heard loud and clear in Washington. In late July, just before Vance departed for Kinshasa on his second visit, Kissinger recommended that President Ford approve a comprehensive economic package for Zaire, which he had asked his department to prepare following the Vance-Cutler June 27 debriefing of their trip. On July 19, the president signed off on the nearly \$50 million assistance program as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 76 Foreign Aid budget. The economic package broke down as follows: \$20 million in new Export-Import Bank credits, \$15 million in CCC credit and PL 480 (food) assistance; reprogramming \$6 million of an AID developmental loan (for port improvement) into the general category "supporting assistance grant," and adding an additional \$14 million to the category, bringing the total to \$20 million.⁵⁵⁸

James T. Lynn, the White House's Office of Management and Budget director, told the president that the \$20 million supporting assistance grant was intended to provide "immediate balance of payments relief" for Zaire's short-term commercial debt, then in arrears. However, he cautioned that it would be difficult for the administration to defend any sort of increased aid to Zaire on the Hill. "Congress is likely to resist budget

⁵⁵⁸ "Memorandum for the President from James T. Lynn, Subject: Foreign Aid Budget Amendment for Zaire (Congo)," July 17, 1975, p. 1 [Database on-line]; available from Declassified Documents Reference System. On the same subject, see also "Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger, Subject: Mr. Lynn's Memo to the President Concerning a Foreign Aid Budget Amendment for Zaire – Add-on," July 17, 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Zaire (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library.

amendments for Zaire in view of Mobutu's accusations, the lack of publicly defensible rationale for increased aid, and Presidential vetoes for domestic spending." He remarked that the only justification would be overriding foreign policy concerns, which he properly deferred to Henry Kissinger.⁵⁵⁹ It was several months before the appropriate congressional committees began to consider the economic aid package. However, the presidential approval gave Sheldon Vance something with which to appease Mobutu during his second trip to Kinshasa.

Secondly, following Vance's return from his first trip in late June, Kissinger, who had become increasingly agitated with the downturn in the FNLA's military fortunes, became the strongest advocate for an active American role in Angola. Sheldon Vance's report of his recent discussions with Mobutu clearly influenced Kissinger's proclivity for some sort of firm demonstration of American resolve in Angola, at least in part as a sign of American support for Mobutu.

It also slanted his presentation to the National Security Council in favor of option 3 - active American involvement in Angola. Before briefing the gist of all three proposed options for American action to the NSC's meeting on June 27, convened solely to discuss the Angolan situation, Kissinger first quickly summarized the results of Vance's trip. He pointed out that Mobutu had emphasized the negative impact on Zaire if Moscow's

⁵⁵⁹ "Memorandum for the President from James T. Lynn, Subject: Foreign Aid Budget Amendment for Zaire (Congo), July 17, 1975, pp. 1-2

military aid to the MPLA proved decisive in determining Angola's future, noting, "Soviet arms have reversed the situation. Sheldon Vance has just come back from talking with Mobutu, who has stressed the change in the balance of power. Portugal is tilting toward Neto, and the Soviets are putting important equipment, such as armed personnel carriers, into Neto's hands."⁵⁶⁰

Given this situation, Kissinger's assessment was that neither the neutrality option (option 1) nor a diplomatic offensive (option 2) involving the Soviet Union, Portugal, the OAU and Angola's neighbors would, in the end, best serve American interests. The probable outcome of doing nothing and remaining neutral would be Zaire's move toward a left and anti-American posture, while the Soviets would view a diplomatic endeavor - words without resolute action - as a sign of American weakness.⁵⁶¹ President Ford quickly agreed with Kissinger's assessment of the Angolan situation, noting, "It seems to me that doing nothing is unacceptable. As for diplomatic efforts, it is naïve to think that's going to happen; and the proposal on Portugal sounds amateurish."⁵⁶²

While the National Security Council made no collective decision at this point, President Ford indicated his propensity, like that of Kissinger, to become actively engaged in the Angolan conflict. Before adjourning the meeting, he asked CIA Director

⁵⁶⁰ "National Security Council Meeting, Subject: Angola," June 27, 1975, p. 3, National Security Adviser, National Security Council Meetings File, Box 2, Gerald R. Ford Library.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁵⁶² Ibid., p. 7.

Colby to develop arms package options. The direct presidential request imparted an increased sense of urgency to the Angolan problem and set the Washington machinery in motion, leading directly to President Ford's July 18th decision on American intervention. An important factor in that decision, however, resided thousands of miles away in the Zairian capital. There, America's long-time client in southern Africa, President Sese Seko Mobutu, understanding that his coup allegations and expulsion of Hinton had captured Washington's attention, awaited the return of Sheldon Vance.

The Vance Mission – Second Trip

Vance departed the United States on or about July 18, the same day President Ford authorized the execution of option 3 by the CIA – active, covert support for both the FNLA and UNITA (codename IAFEATURE). The president told Kissinger, "I have decided on Angola. I think we should go." Kissinger, knowing that Vance was already scheduled to depart for a second visit to Kinshasa, replied, "We'll send Vance to Mobutu [words deleted] and ask him to come up with a program."⁵⁶³ Both the presidential authorization of IAFEATURE and the economic package, which Ford approved as Vance was enroute to Kinshasa, were clearly intended to signal Washington's sincere intentions

⁵⁶³ "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Middle East; Angola; Soviet Grain; SALT; President's Trip," July 18, 1975, National Security Adviser Memoranda of Conversation, 1973-1977, July 18, 1975 – Ford, Kissinger, Box 13, Gerald R. Ford Library. Kissinger had previously written the president, in justification of the proposed \$50 million in economic aid, that he had asked Sheldon Vance to return to Zaire to continue his earlier discussion with Mobutu on what the United States could do to improve the bilateral relationship. "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Mr. Lynn's Memo to the President Concerning a Foreign Aid Budget Amendment – Add-on," July 17, 1975, p. 1.

to repair the rift with Kinshasa.⁵⁶⁴ IAFEATURE, however, expanded Vance's charter from smoothing the ruffled feathers of President Mobutu with a promise of economic assistance to also developing a joint Zairian-American plan of action for Angola.⁵⁶⁵

By the time Sheldon Vance arrived in Kinshasa on or about 19 July, Mobutu had already developed a program for stepping up Zaire's military involvement in Angola.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ James Lynn alluded to the conciliatory purpose of the intended aid package for Zaire. Referring to Mobutu's false allegations of American involvement in the recent coup, Lynn told President Ford, "State argues that failure to give him assistance at this time could 'have severely negative, immediate consequences on our political and economic interests in Zaire,' possibly going as far as a formal break in diplomatic relations and nationalization of U.S. firms." "Memorandum for the President from James T. Lynn, Subject: Foreign Aid Budget Amendment for Zaire (Congo)," July 17, 1975, p. 1. Kissinger, who forwarded Lynn's memorandum to the president on the same day it was given to him, added his own thoughts on the purpose of the proposed economic aid to Zaire. Referring to Mobutu, he wrote, "We...believe we need to inform him of our desire to be of assistance with a \$50 million package as a demonstration of our good faith." "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Mr. Lynn's Memo to the President Concerning a Foreign Aid Budget Amendment for Zaire – Add-on," July 17, 1975, p. 1.

⁵⁶⁵ In his 1999 memoirs, *Years of Renewal*, Kissinger continued to defend the decision to intervene in Angola as necessary to prevent its domination by Communists, but he conveniently shifted the blame for the failure to do so mainly to the Congress, which cut off funding for the endeavor. However, while never doubting the correctness of the decision, he opined that the administration made a major mistake in executing the policy because no one in the White House – "someone with real conviction about what we were doing" – was charged with overseeing the operation. The president, Scowcroft and he "were spread too thinly," and were too busy to give the program the daily attention it needed for success. Having confessed to this transgression, he then blames CIA director William Colby, who "emerged by default as the de facto commander of the Angolan operation." However, Kissinger tells us that Colby spent most of his time defending the CIA before a hostile Congress, and "Given his growing aversion to covert operations, he had little predisposition to give impetus to the Angolan operation." As a result, Kissinger asserts that Colby executed the American involvement too slowly, preventing a quick change in the balance on the ground and surrendering the escalatory edge to the Soviet Union. Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 811-813. Kissinger had a track record for blame shifting, but it seemed to reach new heights in his account of why the MPLA was able to defeat both the FNLA and UNITA. By laying the blame for poor execution at Colby's feet, he manages to avoid mentioning Mobutu's singularly important role, from start to finish, in the covert program. While no major player in the White House may have had the time to closely monitor and direct the Angolan program, Kissinger had his "commander" in the form of Mobutu, with Sheldon Vance acting as the close liaison between Kinshasa and Washington - another case of back channel communications designed to circumvent the Washington foreign policy bureaucracy.

Referred to by Kissinger as “the Mobutu Plan,” that program, as it played out during his discussions with Vance, evolved into a two-track effort, with the United States deeply involved in both, but with Mobutu shaping the form and substance of the American contribution.⁵⁶⁷

Mobutu spelled out the first track to Vance during their earliest meetings. It entailed, first, the immediate release of in-stock Zairian Army military equipment to both the FNLA and UNITA, but with the former receiving the lion’s share of the weaponry. By

⁵⁶⁶ On July 17, one day before President Ford authorized IAFEATURE, Kissinger briefed him on Nathaniel Davis’ written objections to the program and AF’s support for either the neutrality or diplomatic option. Kissinger labeled the State Department objections to a covert, paramilitary program as a “disgrace,” remarking that force, in his words, “physical domination,” was the normal *modus operandi* throughout Africa. The president, who had not seen the objections paper, asked if it contained a recommendation for arms support. Kissinger’s response to the Ford inquiry, some of which is deleted, was that the United States “should send Vance [deleted]. Then we should have Mobutu and Kaunda get together and work it out. Without us, Neto will win.” This pronouncement seemed to capture the president’s attention. He asked if the odds for an FNLA-UNITA victory would improve if the United States became actively involved. Kissinger responded, “We will know better when we see the Mobutu Plan.” “Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Frank Lindsay; Angola; Zaire; Middle East,” July 17, 1975, p. 2, National Security Adviser – Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, July 17, 1975 – Ford-Kissinger, Gerald R. Ford Library. This conversation reveals that the groundwork for the Mobutu Plan had already been laid prior to Vance’s second visit, and that only the details of its execution and an American promise to support it remained. Vance and Mobutu, along with the latter’s top generals (at least those who had not be implicated in the alleged coup), worked out the details during Vance’s second trip, and the United States fulfilled its commitment through the funding of both IAFEATURE and the replacement program for Zairian equipment transferred to the FNLA and UNITA.

⁵⁶⁷ Much of Vance’s reporting on his earliest meetings with Mobutu is still classified. Prior to July 22, he apparently had three discussions on Angola with Mobutu, starting on July 20, because on the 22nd he sent this message to Washington. “Now that I have had three sessions with Mobutu on Angola, I believe it is useful to reflect on where we’ve come so far and where we might be headed.” “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 6798, Subject: Mobutu-Vance Meetings; Angola,” 221635Z July 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library. Nearly one and one-half pages of the text of this message were deleted. However, subsequent messages on Vance’s second trip are more complete, making it possible to reconstruct the outline, if not all the minute details, of the Zairian-American program.

22 July, Mobutu had already released enough equipment from his Mobilization Reserve stocks to outfit five infantry battalions – approximately 5,000 men – as well as nine armored cars and some heavy mortars and anti-tank weapons. He had also told Vance that he was preparing to immediately ship the existing equipment of five of his paratroop battalions into Angola, with the material from four of the para-battalions destined for Holden Roberto and the other one for Savimbi.⁵⁶⁸

The second part of “Track One” involved a quick American replacement of at least some of the Mobilization Reserve equipment sent to Angola through an emergency increase in Fiscal Year 75 Foreign Military Sales (FMS) to Zaire. Replacement of the rest of that equipment, plus the equipment from Mobutu’s five paratroop battalions, was to be achieved through an increase in the FY76 Military Assistance Program (MAP) funding request for Zaire. Vance alluded to this arrangement when he met with Mobutu for the fourth time on the evening of July 23. Mobutu “reiterated his hope that the items already sent Angola from his Mobilization Reserve, as well as the key items from

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid. Some of the details of the Zairian equipment provided to the pro-Western factions can be ascertained from the following: “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 6755, Subject: Vance-Mobutu: Third Meeting; Evening July 21,” 220141Z July 1975, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library; “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 6798, Subject: Mobutu-Vance Meetings: Angola,” 221635Z July 1975, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library; “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 6877, Subject: Vance Mission: Fourth Meeting with Mobutu on July 23,” 241335Z July 1975, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976*, vol. E-6, *Documents on Africa, 1973-1977* [database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e6>.

paratroops which we cannot supply in the present emergency program, would be replaced subsequently.”⁵⁶⁹

Washington’s response to the quick weapons replacement request was, itself, remarkably rapid, demonstrating again Washington’s desire to ingratiate itself with President Mobutu. Three weeks after returning from his second visit, Sheldon Vance sent a message to the American Charge d’Affaires in Kinshasa, Lannon Walker, instructing him to assist the Zairian government with the preparation of Form 1513, Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA), “using FMS from last fiscal year.”⁵⁷⁰ In the telegram, Vance detailed the equipment that should be included in the LOA, which must have been agreed upon during his trip to Kinshasa in July. The Vance-provided generic listing of weapons indicates that it was, indeed, the replacement for at least some of the arms transferred out of Mobutu’s Mobilization Reserve stock. Vance also told Charge Walker that, in addition to the listed weapons, the Letter of Offer and Acceptance should

⁵⁶⁹ “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 6877, Subject: Vance Mission: Fourth Meeting with Mobutu on July 23,” p. 1.

⁵⁷⁰ “Secretary of State Telegram 194823, 160044Z August 1975, Subject: FMS for Zaire,” p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams from SecState – NODIS, Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library. The reference to “last fiscal year” refers to FY75, which ran from July 1, 1974 to June 30, 1975. Fiscal Year 76 began on July 1, 1975 and ended on June 30, 1976. Since then, the fiscal year time frame has changed to run from October 1 to September 30. This message underscores the influence that Sheldon Vance wielded in the Zaire-American relationship and the confidence Kissinger placed in him and not in the State Department’s African Bureau, i.e., the message was transmitted “For Charge from Vance.”

also request a small training team of American military personnel, “which can prepare FAZ to utilize effectively weapons of this variety.”⁵⁷¹

Moreover, Vance made good on the promise to replace the other equipment transferred to Roberto and Savimbi. Soon after his return to Washington, Vance discussed an increase in the FY 76 MAP funding for Zaire with officials from the Defense Department.⁵⁷² According to Colonel Clinton E. Granger, the National Security Council’s Planning Staff director, Vance presented the department “with a shopping list for military equipment.” Vance then contacted Colonel Granger to press for a budget

⁵⁷¹ Ibid. FAZ refers to the Armed Forces of Zaire. The equipment list included: 1,000 M-16s; 100 light anti-tank weapons (LAW); 5 60mm, 5 81mm, and 17 4.2mm mortars; 20 each of 30 caliber, 50 caliber, and 7.62 (M-60) machine guns. Vance also indicated that there was still FMS money available from the last fiscal year and that Washington would be advising Zaire on the utilization of the remaining FY75 credits as well as FY76 credits. Ibid., pp. 1-2. This listing, as Vance suggested, was only the first installment of a much larger replacement program. John Stockwell provides a complete inventory of arms and material delivered to Zaire in Appendix 6 of his Angolan study. Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 267-268.

⁵⁷² In early 1975, a U.S. Military Technical Assistance Team (MTAT) led by Brigadier General Rockwell of the Joint Staff visited Zaire to assess its military requirements. The Rockwell Report, submitted in early March 1975, recommended that the United States increase its military assistance “substantially” above the \$3.5 million in FY 75 Foreign Military Sales credits and .3 million grant aid. The general’s rationale was that the recommended increase was necessary to maintain a close, ‘special’ relationship with Zaire, which was in the U.S. national interest, as State and DOD had briefed his team before its left for Kinshasa. Moreover, Rockwell concluded, “I return from Zaire with the distinct impression that should the U.S. simply send them a piece of paper – a report – with no indication that we are willing to increase our assistance to them in modernizing their military forces, then political relations between the two countries will deteriorate, thus jeopardizing U.S. military and economic access to Zaire.” Based on the Rockwell Report, the FY 76 MAP request for Zaire totaled \$9.5 million - a \$6 million increase over FY 75. “Memorandum for OJCS (J5), OSD (ISA), and Office, Secretary of State (African Affairs), Subject: Zaire Military Technical Assistance Team (MTAT) Report,” 7 March 1975, pp. 1-2, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976*, vol. E-6, *Documents on Africa, 1973-1976* [database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e6>. For an interesting account of the Rockwell team’s exit briefing for Mobutu, which reveals the Zairian president’s superb manipulative skills, see “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 1494, Subject: President Mobutu and Zaire’s Defense Problems,” 200958Z February 1975, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976*, vol. E-6, *Documents on Africa, 1973-1976*.

amendment increase of \$9.5 million over the then requested \$9.5 million, bringing the total to \$19 million. Granger told Kissinger, “The Ambassador feels strongly that there is an urgent requirement for at least \$19 million in total map grant for Zaire in support of on-going programs that you are aware of.”⁵⁷³

“Track Two,” worked out between Vance, Mobutu, and his top generals, but with Mobutu clearly having the final say, involved direct American military and financial support for both pro-Western factions, using Kinshasa as the main transshipment point for weapons transfer. This was the IAFEATURE portion of the program, and Vance apparently informed Mobutu of the covert program’s funding on July 23, if not before, which at that time consisted of only the initial \$6 million.

Prior to meeting Mobutu on July 23, he had received a message from Kissinger that directed him to put together, with Mobutu, “a package based on the highest priority items

⁵⁷³ “Memorandum for Secretary Kissinger, Subject: Map Level for Zaire,” September 8, 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library. The new requirement of \$19 million was an increase of \$15.5 million from the \$3.5 million in FY 75 MAP funding for Zaire. Granger also told Kissinger that Vance recommended the substantial increase in order “to insure full support from Mobutu.” Perhaps the colonel erred in using the word “from” as opposed to the word “for.” More likely, however, is that once more the United States was genuflecting to the Zairian president to secure his continued support for the American action in Angola and probably for American policy throughout sub-Saharan Africa as well. Ibid. Granger also expressed his support for the increase as an operational necessity, and recommended that the full \$19 million be included in the initial bill rather than as a supplemental so as not to draw “interest and questions on our rationale.” Ibid., p. 2. This recommendation, of course, was designed to prevent Congress from determining that the increase was intended to replace Zairian equipment already transferred to the FNLA and UNITA, some of which, no doubt, was American, since the United States was a major supplier of weapons to Zaire (along with China, France and Belgium, and to a lesser extent, Israel). American law prohibited the transfer of American-supplied military equipment to third parties.

which is in the Dols 6 million range. Bear in mind that political action and other programs come out of that total, and CIA estimates transportation can add 25-50 percent to cost.”⁵⁷⁴ Thus, when he met Mobutu that evening, he told him that it was necessary to develop a plan for the \$6 million dollar package, “although we did not exclude the possibility of some additional assistance now.”⁵⁷⁵

At this point, Mobutu gave his key input into the arms packages, which the CIA no doubt used to develop the assistance programs for the FNLA and UNITA. First, he changed the priorities of what his generals had previously given Vance. He indicated that the most urgent requirement was for 5,000 M-16 riles with two-months ammunition,

⁵⁷⁴ “Secretary of State Telegram 172996, Subject: Zaire Aid Package,” 230003Z July 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegram from SecState – NODIS, Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library. In the same message Kissinger also instructed Vance to develop another arms package that was apparently intended to replace the Zairian military equipment which, by then, had already been released to the FNLA and UNITA. When Vance met with Mobutu on July 23, he told him that he had forwarded to Washington the list of equipment replacement requirements as well as the priorities for replacement that had been given to him by Mobutu’s generals, probably when he met with Generals Molongiye and Babia on the morning of 21 July. “American Embassy Kinshasa 6755, Subject: Vance-Mobutu: Third Meeting; Evening July 21,” 220141Z July 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (1), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library. The purpose of this meeting on 21 July, which involved the two generals but apparently not Mobutu, so the subject line is misleading, concerned some of the Zairian equipment being readied for shipment to Angola. Most of the text is deleted, but I surmise the generals made Vance aware of what they needed from the United States, and in what priority, to replace that equipment. They also must have discussed the types of equipment most urgently needed by the FNLA and UNITA, as in his July 23 meeting with Mobutu, Vance referred to the “broad priority of categories of equipment his generals had given us, on his instruction, it is clear. This so we could determine the most useful types of assistance both for a \$6 million program and for any aid we might be able to provide above that.” “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram, Kinshasa 6877, Subject: Vance Mission: Fourth Meeting with Mobutu on July 23,” 241335Z July 1975, p. 2, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976*, vol. E-6, *Documents on Africa, 1973-1976* [database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e6>.

⁵⁷⁵ “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram, Kinshasa 6877, Subject: Vance Mission: Fourth Meeting with Mobutu on July 23, p. 1.

which suggests, incorrectly as it turned out, that he thought the Angolan conflict would be over in two months. His second priority was anti-tank guns to counter the Soviet-supplied armored vehicles, remarking they “were having a devastating effect on the FNLA.” He told Vance that the M-16s should be shipped to Zaire by air. After re-prioritizing a number of other weapons systems on the general’s list, he specified which should be shipped by air and which by sea.

Vance cabled Kissinger that he had incorporated Mobutu’s ideas into a \$6 million assistance package. Referencing a still-classified State Department telegram to Kinshasa, he reported that he had also included Mobutu’s ideas in a larger aid package. This second recommendation, Vance said, “incorporates Mobutu’s most urgent minimum requirements and, according to our rough estimates, amounts to \$10 to \$12 million. I wish to make clear Mobutu would not Rpt not regard what we could send under the \$6 million program as enough to redress the balance in Angola.” Vance then urged that Washington give top priority to reviewing both packages, but that he strongly recommended the larger assistance program “so that we will have a real impact on Angolan situation.”⁵⁷⁶

Mobutu’s appeals for more than the originally authorized amount had its desired effect in Washington. On July 27, two days after Vance’s return to Washington, President Ford

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

approved an additional \$8 million for IAFEATURE from the CIA's FY 75 Contingency Reserve Fund.⁵⁷⁷

The MPLA Advances

Between Vance's second and third trips, the military situation in Angola had continued to deteriorate for the FNLA and UNITA, despite Mobutu's provision of substantial Zairian arms. As previously discussed, in early July, the MPLA had ousted the military forces of both movements from Luanda. The Popular Movement then continued its momentum by driving against the FNLA in the north and the FNLA (Chipenda)-UNITA coalition in central Angola.

In early August, as the violence spiraled upward, Lisbon dispatched a three-man mission, headed by then Foreign Minister Melo Antunes, in another attempt to establish a workable transitional government. This time, their efforts involved only the MPLA and UNITA, since no individual leader or party in Portugal supported Holden Roberto and his FNLA. They were not successful.⁵⁷⁸ Subsequently, on August 9, the FNLA and UNITA,

⁵⁷⁷ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 206. Stockwell alleges that the CIA gave \$2, 750,000 of the original \$6 million to Mobutu, in cash, to encourage him to send more of his own arms to the FNLA and UNITA. Ibid. Given that Mobutu appeared to be single-handily shaping the form and substance of the American assistance, Stockwell's allegation is probably correct and is yet another example of the United States mending fences and trying to convince the Zairian president of its honest efforts to attend to his most urgent requirements.

⁵⁷⁸ Historian Norrie MacQueen argues that the Portuguese attempt to broker an agreement between the MPLA and UNITA failed, "largely as a result of MPLA intransigence." MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 185-186. The Popular Movement's intractability at this time is not surprising since it was operating from a position of both political and military strength. The MPLA not only controlled the

united through their mutual hostility to the MPLA, jointly declared their departure from the provisional government. Shortly thereafter, spokesmen for both announced they would establish a rump FNLA-UNITA cabinet.⁵⁷⁹

Less than two weeks later, on August 22, Lisbon appointed Admiral Leonel Cardoso as the new high commissioner for Angola (he arrived in early September), replacing Brigadier General Silva Cardoso. At the same time, it announced it was suspending the Alvor Accord, finally abandoning any pretext of maintaining a viable provisional government.⁵⁸⁰ The Portuguese actions did nothing to abate the MPLA's offensive. By

capital city, but also most of the other major cities and towns, including Benguela and its neighboring port city, Lobito, the Atlantic terminus for the Benguela railroad. In mid-August, during the State Department's regularly scheduled weekly staff meetings, Edward Mulcahy from AF briefed Kissinger on the situation on the ground in Angola. Referring to the MPLA's dominance, he noted that the movement remained in control of Benguela, but added, "Savimbi said the day before yesterday that he felt that the forces he and Roberto have in the vicinity would be enough to kick them out of there in a few days. We tend to doubt it, given their past performance." "The Secretary's 8 a.m. Staff Meeting," August 15, 1975, p. 10 [database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts. Mulcahy's analysis of the weakness of the FNLA-UNITA coalition was right on the mark. It was able to retake Benguela, and Lobito, in early November, but only with substantial help from elements of the South African Defense Force. Fred Bridgland's study of Jonas Savimbi, largely based on his personal observations from frequent sojourns into the UNITA leader's Central Angolan stronghold, provides a particularly enlightening analysis of the major South African offensive in Angola and its favorable effects, if only temporary, on the military fortunes of the joint UNITA-FNLA force from late October to mid-November. Fred Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company, Ltd., 1986), especially Chapter 12, "Prelude to Independence."

⁵⁷⁹ According to Edward Mulcahy of AF, the FNLA spokesman said this did not signify they were surrendering their governmental post, even though they had departed Luanda. "The Secretary's 8 a.m. Staff Meeting," August 15, 1975, p. 8. Despite this show of bravura, their departure from the transitional government left the MPLA in the driver's seat.

⁵⁸⁰ MacQueen notes that following the suspension of the January agreement, Portugal's government undertook a major diplomatic effort to reassert its leadership in the Angolan crisis, including talks with officials of the United Nations and key African leaders. The objective of the endeavor was to gain international support for the convening of a conference between the Portuguese and all three liberation movements, "in which specific forms or means of transferring...power would be studied." As MacQueen

early September, the movement had extended its control over twelve of Angola's sixteen provinces and was still on the offensive, although this was about to change.⁵⁸¹

The Violation of American Law

In Washington, early September found Secretary Kissinger agitated more than usual, mainly at Charge d'Affaires Lannon Walker in Kinshasa. On September 4, a David Ottaway article, written on August 29 from Kinshasa, alleged that Zaire was using American-provided aircraft to transfer American-supplied arms to the FNLA in northern Angola.⁵⁸² Ottaway's story came on the heels of an MPLA communiqué that reported an air bridge had been established between Kinshasa and Carmona, a town about 150 miles northeast of Luanda. The communiqué alleged that reliable eyewitnesses and diplomatic sources had seen American Skymasters (the C-54, a cargo plane in the Zairian air inventory) transporting "sizeable amounts of heavy war material, including long-range cannons and various types of equipment."⁵⁸³

points out, this effort really signaled a return to the pre-Alvor days and, if agreed to, would have nullified the MPLA's military successes. The Popular Movement rejected the Portuguese attempt to restart the negotiation process – and the war raged on. MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 187.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 186.

⁵⁸² David B. Ottaway, "Washington Warns Zaire: No U.S. Weapons to Angola," *Washington Post*, September 4, 1975.

⁵⁸³ The American Consul General in Luanda, Angola, Tom Killoran, cited the entire MPLA communiqué in "American Consul Luanda, Luanda Telegram 1228, Subject: MPLA Threatens Military Action against Zairian and South African Forces in Angola," 221125Z August 1975, p. 1-2 [database on-line]; available from Declassified Documents Reference System. Mobutu had American-supplied C-54s as well as C-130s.

Ottaway further reported that unidentified American embassy officials in Kinshasa had labeled the MPLA allegations as “absurd and without foundation,” but suggested that Zaire might be passing on American arms to the FNLA or using American-supplied aircraft to support the movement.” The same officials then told Ottaway that they had recently reiterated the legal restrictions on transfer of MAP equipment to third parties, “but admit that the monitoring of the use of American planes and arms given to the Zairian Army is a delicate problem.”⁵⁸⁴

Ottaway’s revelations, especially the quotes from American embassy personnel, set off a minor shock wave in the State Department and grabbed Kissinger’s attention just before his September 4 weekly staff meeting. He asked the fired Nathaniel Davis, still haplessly filling in as African Bureau chief, if “we” had in fact discussed the restrictions on the transfer of MAP equipment with the Zairians. Davis replied in the affirmative, noting that most recently Walker had done so - on his own initiative. This piqued Kissinger’s irritation and he asked, rhetorically, “What possessed him to do it?”⁵⁸⁵

Davis tried to protect his Kinshasa subordinate by explaining that the charge had confused his instructions from Washington. When Under Secretary of State Joseph Sisco confirmed that Walker had acted on his own, he probably saved Davis more

⁵⁸⁴ Ottaway, “Washington Warns Zaire.”

⁵⁸⁵ “Secretary’s Staff Meeting; Attached to Decision Summary,” September 4, 1975, pp. 33-34 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

embarrassment, but cost Walker his credibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of the secretary. The annoyed Kissinger abruptly ended the discussion of Zaire and Angola by remarking, “Fine. I just wanted to know what the facts were.”⁵⁸⁶

Of interest, during Vance’s second Kinshasa visit, he reported back to Washington that he had “reminded” Mobutu that no American material supplied through the MAP program could be transferred from Zaire to another country or party. Mobutu ensured Vance “that no US material, no matter how old it might be, would be sent to Angola.”⁵⁸⁷ Now, however, with the Mobutu Plan in full swing, Kissinger was perturbed that Charge Walker had taken it upon himself to reiterate Vance’s reminder, which had really been no more than a wink and nod to the Zairian president, even as Mobutu’s response was a wink and nod to the American emissary. Moreover, Walker had apparently talked to the American press. Worse still, Walker’s actions came just before the Ford Administration’s request for an increase in FY 76 MAP funding for Mobutu’s armed forces. The last thing the White House wanted, or needed, at this time was any situation that might focus congressional attention on Zaire.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

⁵⁸⁷ “American Embassy Kinshasa, Kinshasa Telegram 6877, Subject: Vance Mission: Fourth Meeting with Mobutu July 23,” p. 2. Vance’s reminder to Mobutu, of course, allowed Washington, as necessary, to declare that it had reiterated the restrictions on the transfer of American arms, thereby fulfilling at least the spirit of congressional restrictions on such transfers.

⁵⁸⁸ Kissinger, Vance, and others no doubt realized that some, perhaps a lot, of American equipment would end up in the hands of the FNLA and probably UNITA also. Vance’s “reminder” to Mobutu served a dual purpose. First, it provided Washington with a cover in the event of a media leak. Secondly, it sent a

The tenacious, if less that “diplomatic” Charge Walker was not silenced yet, however. On September 10, he sent a prescient, but prickly, telegram to the State Department, questioning the degree of the American commitment to Mobutu in light of what Walker saw as the Zairian leader’s dual objectives in Angola: defeating the MPLA and securing Cabinda for his own purposes.⁵⁸⁹ The charge urged Washington to think about the implications for the United States of Mobutu’s growing belief that “we would help him impose his kind of solution in Angola and Cabinda, finance the recommendation of the Rockwell Report and use our money and influence to fill his \$400 million deficit too.”⁵⁹⁰

After a lengthy discourse on that subject, Walker then predicted that, with the recent fall of Caxito to the MPLA, Mobutu would send his military, “in battalion strength,” into Angola and the FLEC into Cabinda – both of which subsequently occurred.⁵⁹¹ The

message to Mobutu that while he had been apprised of the restrictions, the United States would not monitor the use of such equipment, especially as its employment affected the agreed-upon Mobutu Plan.

⁵⁸⁹ No doubt Walker had been told by his superiors in the State Department, even as the American Congress and public were later told, that the United States’ objective was to establish a military balance on the ground between the MPLA and the pro-Western factions, compelling them to return to the negotiations table to work out a peaceful transition to independence. From his vantage point in Kinshasa, however, the American charge realized that Mobutu wanted a victory, and he mistakenly thought this contradicted the American goal.

⁵⁹⁰ “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 8192, Subject: Zaire Economic Situation/Angolan War,” 101550Z September 1975, p. 1, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (2), Gerald R. Ford Library. See note 572 on p. 327 for an explanation of the Rockwell Report.

⁵⁹¹ Mobutu’s desire to dominate, or at least have an important say, in the affairs of oil-rich Cabinda, led him to support one faction of the bifurcated, secessionist Front for the Liberation of the Cabindan Enclave (FLEC). Zaire’s often-hostile neighbor across the Congo River, the Congo (Brazzaville), supported the other faction for the same reason. Mobutu argued that the enclave should be entitled to determine for itself its future relationship with Angola proper. This, however, flew in the face of the stance taken by all three

charge wrapped up his missive by remarking that, from the standpoint of American interests, we should not allow Mobutu “to pull us into an untenable position. Therefore, unless we are certain we can provide the increased financial and military resources which will inevitably be required by the current trends – we had better tell Mobutu to slow down in Angola and Cabinda and turn to work on his economic problems.”⁵⁹²

In his memoirs, Kissinger doesn’t tell us whether or not he personally saw this cable from Walker.⁵⁹³ What Walker was saying, however, sounded much like the ill-fated

Angolan liberation movements that Cabinda was an integral part of Angola. By early June 1975, the MPLA controlled the enclave and both FLEC factions were in disarray. However, according to John Stockwell, Mobutu approached the CIA in October 1975 with a plan to invade and annex Cabinda. In response, the Agency provided a one-thousand-man arms package, while CIA officers began training FLEC guerrillas in Zaire. On November 2, 1975, a joint Zairian-FLEC military force invaded the enclave. The MPLA and its Cuban advisers repelled the intruders who hastily retreated back to Zaire. Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 163-164. On FLEC’s origins and evolution, see Phyllis M. Martin, “The Cabinda Connection,” *passim*.

⁵⁹² “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 8192, Subject: Zaire Economic Situation/Angolan War,” p. 3.

⁵⁹³ Kissinger does tell us that on October 16, 1975, he met with a Foreign Service Officer stationed in Kinshasa, whom he called back to Washington for a personal conversation, after the officer had sent a message on the Zaire-Angolan situation through the State Department’s “dissent channel.” Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 792-793. The official’s identity remains anonymous, but Kissinger’s “Mr. X” was probably Charge Walker, because the chances of its being someone else are remote. First, by at least early September, as discussed above, Kissinger was annoyed with the charge. Secondly, on October 11, another American Embassy Kinshasa cable arrived in Washington. This was sent in the dissent channel, and the upper echelons of the State Department did not receive it well. William G. Hyland, for example, gave Kissinger his assessment of the cable’s contents, dismissing the recommendations as “naive,” and the overall analysis as “limp and with almost meaningless alternative policy suggestions.” “Memorandum from William G. Hyland to The Secretary, Subject: Comments on Embassy Kinshasa Cable on Angola,” October 15, 1975, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976*, vol. E-6, *Documents on Africa, 1973-1976* (Database online); available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e6>. In the October Kinshasa cable, Walker indicated in the first paragraph that the political and economic officers of his staff, and not he, had prepared the analysis, and that they were not privy to a detailed knowledge of the American involvement in Angola. “The drafters,” he said, “have accepted the fact that I cannot share with them all the information pertinent to such an analysis and they understand the message must be sent in this channel.” The authors assessed the risks to American interests in the region, given what they knew of the current policy, and recommended

Ambassador Hinton's message to Mobutu during his brief, unproductive service in Kinshasa prior to his expulsion. While Kissinger tolerated and often encouraged dissenting opinions prior to a decision, once that decision was made, all levels of the bureaucracy were expected to fully support it, without question and without leaking it to the media.⁵⁹⁴ Walker's initiative, at another time, might have earned Kissinger's grudging respect. But his cable came nearly two months after the presidential decision to

a change of course – “an alternative policy line” – in their own words, including a series of “fail safe” check points that would trigger a full reassessment of the policy prior to any further American commitment of resources. What they didn't know at the time was that at least one of those crucial check points had already been passed – that of their suggested policy barrier to the transshipment to Angola of American-supplied equipment. In general, the message was highly critical of the extant American policy in Zaire and Angola, especially what they perceived as an open-ended American commitment to Mobutu, noting, “US and Zairian interests in Angola are not perfectly congruent. In some circumstances Mobutu, after accepting substantial US aid, might opt for a solution which would cover his interests (assured access to the sea, a secure border with Angola, guaranteed use of the Benguela railroad) but leave ours unprotected.” As the charge, Walker was responsible for the actions of his subordinates, despite his disclaimer to authorship of the message. Given this, it is most likely that Walker, himself, was summoned to Washington to meet with the secretary. Kissinger's account of his “personal conversation” with the Kinshasa emissary comes across as professional, if not cordial. He explained his own analysis of the situation and the consequences for southern African as the United States stood idly by while the Soviet Union imposed a Communist government in Angola. Naturally, for Kissinger, he later reaffirmed what he said that day as the correct assessment of the Angolan situation. I venture a guess that the conversation was probably one-sided with “Mr. X” having little or no opportunity to further explain the cable's content. This discussion is based on “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 9078/1, Subject: The US, Zaire and Angola,” 110955Z October 1975, *Foreign Relations, 1969-1976*, vol. E-6, *Documents on Africa, 1973-1976* [Database on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e6>.

⁵⁹⁴ A Ford-Kissinger conversation in late December provides valuable insight into Kissinger's fixation on blind loyalty among his staff at the State Department (and the National Security Council). As the two discussed the impending vote on the Tunney Amendment, he told Ford that he was “purging” the African Bureau as a result of an apparent leak to the *New York Times* on American involvement in Angola. A while later, probably still dwelling on the “house cleaning” in his department, he told the president, “It is not just Angola. I think when you make a decision it is the responsibility of each agency head to pull his department in line.” “Memorandum of Conversation,” December 18, 1975, pp. 1-2, National Security Adviser – Memoranda of Conversation, 1973-1977, December 18, 1975 – Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Box 17, Gerald R. Ford Library.

intervene and the initiation of the Mobutu Plan. In early September, Charge Walker was walking on very thin ice, but as a minor player in the execution of the plan, his on-site advice could be ignored, which it was.

As noted above, in his 10 September cable, Walker had predicted that Mobutu would send in his own forces to retake Caxito, a crucial crossroads city, thirty miles north of Luanda. The next day during the weekly State Department staff meeting, William Hyland, head of the department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, brought up the subject, suggesting that he, at least, had reviewed the "Walkergram." Hyland told Secretary Kissinger that the FNLA had suffered a very bad defeat at the town and that Mobutu thought he might have to send in his own forces, "thinly disguised," to save the situation.

Kissinger then told the much-beleaguered Nathaniel Davis that he hoped the "missionary bureau" was going to keep its mouth shut and not advise Mobutu on his course of action. Davis said they would do their best to remain silent, but later, he apparently couldn't pass up the opportunity to open his mouth. He recommended to Kissinger that Sheldon Vance be sent to Kinshasa, a visit that was probably already planned, to "at least advise [Mobutu] of the problem, if he send units in with American equipment, because of the legal problem." Before Kissinger had an opportunity to respond, Davis was rescued by William Hyland, who defused a potential secretarial

blowup by declaring, “Who will know that Mobuto’s units have American equipment? I mean it won’t be that clear. And the NPLA forces will know and so forth, but it won’t be demonstrable. They’re not going to be flying Zairian flags.”⁵⁹⁵

The above discussion demonstrates that Kissinger and those closest to him, such as Hyland, whom Kissinger had brought over from the National Security Council staff, were not particularly concerned about Mobutu’s use, in any manner of his choosing, of American-supplied equipment. Washington, after all, had bought off on the Mobutu Plan, which essentially gave the Zairian leader a free rein in the joint American-Zairian program for Angola. To no avail, Charge Walker’s telegram had pointed out the perils of this major concession.

Kissinger, however, apparently thought Mobutu so indispensable to American foreign policy in Angola, throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and in Third World arenas that he was not particularly concerned that Mobutu, with Washington’s blessing, was violating American law; that in the pursuit of his own local interests, which he couched in global, adversarial terms in his frequent references to Soviet activities in Angola, he might be “pulling” the United States “into an untenable position,” as Walker had forewarned.

⁵⁹⁵ “Secretary’s Staff Meeting,” September 11, 1975, pp. 27-29 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

The Vance Mission – Third Trip

Kissinger did send Vance back to Kinshasa, but not because Nathaniel Davis had recommended it and certainly not to advise Mobutu of the congressional restrictions on his use of American equipment. Vance, accompanied again by Cutler, arrived in Kinshasa on September 18. He met with Mobutu at least three times, on September 19, 20 and 22. He also spent over an hour with Jonas Savimbi on the 19th. It appears that Vance undertook this final visit to Kinshasa to review certain operational and logistic matters connected to the Mobutu Plan, including the increasing involvement of South Africa.

Mobutu first briefed the American emissary on the FNLA's ongoing efforts, along with Zairian forces, to retake Caxito, an important crossroads city just north of Luanda, and on UNITA's actions in central Angola, including Savimbi's intentions to move against the MPLA in Lobito and Benguela on the coast. He told Vance, however, that the latter effort was contingent on the delivery of additional arms to UNITA, especially the American-supplied weapons and equipment, which had recently arrived in Zaire by ship.⁵⁹⁶ Mobutu expressed his satisfaction with this equipment, but then asked for additional supplies, especially 120mm ammunition, increased American airlift support,

⁵⁹⁶ Mobutu was no doubt referring to the military cargo onboard the merchant ship, *American Champion*, which the CIA had leased from the U.S. Navy. It arrived in the port of Matadi (Zaire) on September 12. Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 86.

and more jeeps and trucks, in order to solve “the horrendous logistical problems in Angola.”⁵⁹⁷

Vance’s meeting with Jonas Savimbi on September 19 included the UNITA leader’s own assessment of his operations against the MPLA in eastern Angola along the Benguela Railroad and his preparations to launch an offensive westward to take Lobito and Benguela from the MPLA. As Mobutu had previously indicated, Savimbi told Vance he was low on arms and ammunition, which was delaying this movement. However, with the help of the South Africans, he expected to receive UNITA’s share of the American-provided military equipment shortly.⁵⁹⁸

Savimbi then adamantly denied recent news reports that UNITA was about to enter a coalition with the MPLA against the FNLA, telling Vance that he “would never join with the MPLA in fighting against the FNLA.”⁵⁹⁹ John Stockwell gave us insight into this denial. In September, the CIA learned from an article in the world press that Savimbi had allegedly sent out feelers to the MPLA for “a negotiated solution.” A CIA official in

⁵⁹⁷ “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 8519, Subject: Third Vance Mission: First Meeting with Mobutu, September 19,” p. 3, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (2), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library.

⁵⁹⁸ “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 8520, Subject: Third Vance Mission: With Savimbi,” September 19, 1975, pp. 1-2, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (2), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Kinshasa “promptly interrogated Savimbi” because, according to Stockwell, “We wanted no ‘soft’ allies in our war against the MPLA.”⁶⁰⁰

Savimbi impressed Vance. Noting that this was his first encounter with the UNITA leader, he described Savimbi as “an impressive interlocuteur – articulate, candid, energetic and congenial.” Moreover, Vance added, “He obviously appreciates the support we are giving him.”⁶⁰¹

During his meeting with Mobutu on September 22, the Zairian president told Vance that the South Africans had assigned advisers to UNITA. They were also supporting its POL (petroleum, oil and lubricants) requirements since he “had his hands full” in helping the FNLA and could only provide equipment to UNITA. Vance reported that General Vandenberg, the head of South African security (BOSS), had made three recent trips to Kinshasa, and had “doubtless” arranged this South African assistance.⁶⁰²

By the time Vance arrived in Zaire, the on-the-ground military situation had begun to turn against the MPLA. By mid-September, the Popular Movement found itself battling

⁶⁰⁰ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 193.

⁶⁰¹ “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 8520, Subject: Third Vance Mission: With Savimbi,” p. 4.

⁶⁰² “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 8557, Subject: Third Vance Mission: Meeting with Mobutu September 22,” p. 2, National Security Adviser – Presidential Country Files for Africa, Zaire – State Department Telegrams to SecState – NODIS (2), Box 7, Gerald R. Ford Library. Piero Gleijeses has observed that in September the South Africans promised support to the FNLA as well as UNITA. On September 4, Prime Minister Vorster “authorized the SADF to provide military training, advice and logistical support to UNITA and FNLA. In turn, they would help expel SWAPO from southern Angola.” Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 295. The FNLA in central and southern Angola was that of Chipenda and his guerrilla forces.

not only the FNLA in the northern and central fronts, but also two battalions of Mobutu's own "elite" paracommando forces. According to John Stockwell, the 4th and 7th paracommando battalions entered the Angolan fray on September 11 and were largely responsible for retaking Caxito from the MPLA on September 17.⁶⁰³ In the September 22nd meeting, Vance was quick to congratulate Mobutu on this important victory and the primary role played by his armed forces. Mobutu, "relaxed and expansive," indicated he would soon commit another battalion to the Angolan conflict. Thus, by mid-October,

⁶⁰³ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 163. Portuguese historian Fernando Guimaraes and John Marcum both claim that as early as the middle of May Zairian army elements were operating inside Angola with the FNLA. Citing a Colin Legum article, which appeared in the May 18 edition of the *London Observer*, Guimaraes calculated that 1,200 Zairian troops were inside Angola at the time. Guimaraes, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 105. Marcum alleges this early deployment was Mobutu's "incensed" response to the MPLA's recruitment of the anti-Kinshasa Katangan gendarmes (an estimated 3,500 – 7,000 strong), who took refuge in eastern Angola after Tshombe's unsuccessful secession attempt in 1960. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution* The, vol. II, 278. Their assertions are confirmed by primary evidence. In late May 1975, President Ford, while in Brussels for a NATO summit meeting, met with Portuguese Prime Minister Goncalves. Kissinger's background briefing note to the president mentioned that Goncalves had previously asked Ambassador Carlucci, in Lisbon, "if the U.S. could intercede with President Mobutu of Zaire. He said Mobutu had broken his promise not to involve himself in Angola and was sending men and equipment to one of the liberation groups contending for power." Kissinger told the president that if Goncalves raised this issue, the response should be, "Our own policy is one of neutrality. We do not believe it correct for us to suggest positions to Mobutu." "Meeting with Prime Minister Goncalves of Portugal," May 29, 1975, pp. 2, 7 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts. At any rate, the introduction of the 4th and 7th paracommando battalions in September not only changed the complexion of the ground war, at least temporarily, but also represented a major escalation, which was exceeded only by the introduction of substantial elements of the South African Defense Force in October.

with the addition of yet another battalion, Zaire would have a total of four battalions in action in Angola.⁶⁰⁴

With these forces augmenting the FNLA, Mobutu said he hoped to retake five of the twelve provinces then held by the MPLA. While he did not expect to retake Luanda by Independence Day, November 11, he did anticipate having “a strangulation grip” on the capital city. In concluding his cable, Vance remarked that throughout his discussions, he had made a point of “conveying our admiration” to Mobutu for his efforts in Angola and had assured him of continued American support, yet another example of Washington’s fawning to ensure the “continued support” of its chosen regional strong man.⁶⁰⁵

Pericentrism: Did the Zairian Tail Wag the American Dog?

It is clear from the available records of Vance’s tri-partite mission, as well as the actions in Washington that issued from his findings and recommendations, that President Mobutu was a significant factor in the American decision to intervene in Angola. His advice, recommendations and contributions primarily shaped the form and substance of the American involvement. However, did Washington’s close connection to Mobutu and “Dr. Kissinger’s desire to reward and protect African leaders,” as the Pike Committee

⁶⁰⁴ Mobutu said he had to commit more of his own forces because he “continued to be disappointed with the military capabilities of the FNLA and UNITA.” “American Embassy Kinshasa Telegram 8557, Subject: Third Vance Mission: Meeting with Mobutu September 22,” p. 1-2.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

alleged, really constitute a case of inordinate Zairian influence on the American decision to intervene?⁶⁰⁶

There is no denying that certain dynamics of Tony Smith's pericentric framework operated throughout the course of the American involvement in Angola. As previously discussed, he argues that in explaining the expansion of the Cold War into the Third World, it is necessary to recognize the agency of peripheral "junior actors" who often played a major role in the global struggle between the East and West. They were able to use that struggle to advance their own local or regional interests by camouflaging them in Cold War terms and sometimes "pulling" the super powers into the situation.⁶⁰⁷

Mobutu certainly exercised his personal agency throughout the building conflict, as evidenced by the development and execution of the Mobutu Plan. Moreover, he cloaked his local interests, which entailed having a major voice in the future of both Angola and Cabinda, and perhaps even annexing the latter, in East-West adversarial rhetoric,

⁶⁰⁶ "The CIA Report the President Doesn't Want to Read," 85. Based on what Kissinger had been asserting as the reasons for the American involvement, The Pike Committee actually suggested three factors involved in the American decision to intervene. First, the Soviet Union's support for the MPLA and its own interventionist policy in Angola, as well as its increasing activities in Africa; secondly, the American policy of encouraging "moderate" liberation movements in the region; thirdly, American interest in the stability of the Mobutu regime as well as that of other pro-Western leaders in southern Africa. However, the committee clearly intimated the importance of Zaire by noting, "Past support to Mobutu, along with his responsiveness to some of the United States' recent diplomatic needs for Third World support, make it equally likely that the paramount factor in the U.S. involvement is Dr. Kissinger's desire to reward and protect African leaders in the area." Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Smith, "New Bottles for New Wine," *passim*.

continuously iterating the mantra that a Soviet-dominated Angola would have grave consequences for pro-American Zaire.

There is a fine line, at least in theory, between Mobutu's "pulling" and the United States' "pushing" itself into the conflict. I recognize that the Zairian president was an important catalyst in the American decision-making process on Angola and principally provided the mechanism by which the intervention could and would take place.

However, I do not believe that Mobutu was the preeminent reason for President's Ford decision. Mobutu's pleas for an active American role in Angola would probably have gone unanswered, even after the alleged coup and Hinton's expulsion, if not for Henry Kissinger's strong proclivity to view the unfolding Angolan crisis not only as a challenge to American power and leadership, but also, and especially, as an opportunity to restore American credibility. Consequently, his strong advocacy to the president for American intervention eventually ruled the day.

As least as early as the first week in June 1975, Kissinger was urging President Ford to seriously consider some active form of American involvement in Angola. On June 6, for example, he told the president that they had to pay attention to Angola. He pointed out that the Soviet Union was backing Neto of the MPLA and suggested that the United States should work through Mobutu to support Holden Roberto because, "I don't think

we want the Communists there.”⁶⁰⁸ In a discussion with the president ten days later, Kissinger again said they needed to discuss Angola. He communicated the seriousness of the situation for the pro-Western factions by remarking, “With the aid of Portugal and the Soviet Union, the MPLA is on the offensive and may even take Luanda.” He then implied that increased military support to Robert, via Zaire, was the only way to prevent an MPLA victory, concluding, “We don’t want to see a Communist government in Angola.”⁶⁰⁹

Kissinger seemed intent on involving the United States in the growing Angolan conflict. He saw Mobutu as the necessary facilitator for American intervention, given Zaire’s proximity and access to Angola and the close Mobutu-Roberto relationship. Still, I maintain that the Zairian president was no more than a very important cog in Kissinger’s determination to counter the Soviet Union globally by preventing an important regional Communist victory. Further, since Mobutu was increasingly dependent upon the United States and the West in general, given his woeful economic situation, the United States maintained enormous leverage over Kinshasa. One of Kissinger’s major tasks in this whole affair was to convince the American president of the necessity for active intervention. Given Ford’s deep concerns about the Soviet Union

⁶⁰⁸ “Memorandum of Conversation between President Ford and Dr. Henry Kissinger,” June 6, 1975, p. 4 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

⁶⁰⁹ “Memorandum of Conversation between President Ford and Dr. Henry Kissinger,” June 16, 1975, p. 2 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

and the importance of American leadership and resolve in meeting what he perceived as the growing Communist threat, the sales job was not difficult.

Pericentrism: The Washington-Pretoria Axis

One other regional “friend” in southern Africa deserves consideration in my discussion of the degree to which Angola’s neighbors influenced the American decision to intervene. That is the minority white-ruled Republic of South Africa (RSA). The adoption of Option Two, the “Tilt” Policy, in early 1970 had enhanced South Africa’s standing in Washington. Moreover, Pretoria enjoyed a discreetly close relation with the United States’ military and intelligence communities, especially the CIA. That relationship was further cultivated by an increasing number of “unofficial” visits by South African officials to Washington in 1974, especially after the Portuguese coup of April.⁶¹⁰

Given the close and growing relationship in the early 1970s, the South Africans had ample opportunities to provide some of the information, at least at lower levels, which flowed into the American decision-making process on Angola. As this situation relates to the discussion of pericentrism, the question before us, of course, is “Did South Africa

⁶¹⁰ David B. Ottaway, “South Africa Seeks U.S. Support,” *Washington Post*, May 12, 1974. Although the United States banned official visits by South African government authorities, the State Department routinely granted visas when private organizations sponsored the individual, as was the case for Admiral Hugo H. Biermann, the South African Defense Force Minister. He visited Washington in May 1974 under the auspices of the United States Strategic Institute, but met with Secretary of Navy J. William Middendorf, among other American officials. Ibid.

influence the American decision-making process on Angola to the extent that it ‘pulled’ the United States into a conflict in which it had only minimal interests?”

The question may never be definitively answered, because the evidence on the exact nature of the Washington-Pretoria relationship throughout the Angolan conflict is scarce and often contradictory.⁶¹¹ Despite that, there are some indicators, mostly from the South African side, that suggest it was the United States – not South Africa - that did most of the pulling, especially as it concerns the RSA’s full-scale invasion in mid-October 1975.

Before I discuss this assessment, however, a brief background on the South African stakes in the outcome of the Angolan conflict will highlight why Pretoria saw a possible MPLA victory as so threatening. This potential outcome weighed heavily in its decision-making on Angola.

South African Regional Detente

Although Washington was slow to recognize the consequences for its “Tilt” policy in the wake of Lisbon’s decision to grant independence to its African colonies, Pretoria lived in the neighborhood and responded quickly to the changing environment. Its post-coup strategy, termed *détente*, sought to maintain stability in central and southern Africa

⁶¹¹ Many of the official American documents on the Angolan war remain classified. Moreover, the declassified record is largely silent on South Africa. The CIA’s own methods for conducting IAFEATURE business also contributed to this lack of primary evidence. As John Stockwell has written, the Agency carried out much of its communications very discreetly in what he terms “soft, “unofficial,” or “convenience” files. “Such files are not registered in the agency’s official records system, and hence can never be disclosed under the FOIA.” Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, note on bottom of p. 228.

through a diplomatic offensive directed at the moderate black states in the region, including the offer of substantial financial and technical assistance. In return, and of crucial importance to South Africa's apartheid policy, its détente partners accepted the basic principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. South Africa's new policy also entailed an official distancing from white minority ruled Rhodesia and pressure on the Ian Smith government to move towards majority rule.⁶¹²

The détente policy played upon the moderates' fears of Communist incursions into the region and, as journalist John de St. Jorre has observed, used the resources of multinational corporations whose "money helped oil the sensitive machinery of black-and-white diplomacy."⁶¹³ The South African initiative resulted in some success, including "full diplomatic relations with Malawi; working relations with Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland; and friendly contacts with a handful of more distant states, the most important being the Ivory Coast and Senegal."⁶¹⁴

Pretoria's détente policy also extended to the soon to be independent Mozambique. This somewhat unusual situation came about because of the historical interdependence of the two nation's economies. Pretoria, for example, depended on Mozambique's

⁶¹² The Salisbury government apparently recognized what détente meant for its future relationship with Pretoria. Piero Gleijeses quoted the head of the Rhodesian intelligence service as having written, "South Africa, in search of 'detente' with Black Africa, is prepared to ditch us." Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 274.

⁶¹³ John de St. Jorre, "South Africa: Up Against the World," *Foreign Policy*, no. 28 (Fall 1977): 59.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

substantial labor force and its railroads, which connected South Africa to the seaports of Maputo and Beira and alleviated the congestion in its own harbors.⁶¹⁵ These arrangements, in turn, brought substantial economic benefits to Mozambique. Governance by a leftist FRELIMO could not alter the symbiotic reality, even if the public rhetoric of both nations appeared to put them on a collision course. As the major Zambia newspaper, *Zambia Daily Mail*, noted in April 1975 as Mozambique's June independence approached, "Looking to the future, South Africa is fairly confident that its financial tentacles will be sufficient to grasp an independent Mozambique in a close if cool embrace."⁶¹⁶

Angola was a different matter. Much more than Mozambique, Angola presented the South African government with a particularly vexing security situation. Although South Africa had a vested interest in the Cunene River hydroelectric complex, as previously discussed, its "financial tentacles" did not permeate the Angolan economy. As a consequence, unlike Mozambique, Pretoria would have little, if any, leverage with the large, rich, and soon-to-be independent country to its north. This problem was further

⁶¹⁵ Kenneth Maxwell discusses the important economic interdependence of the South African and Mozambican economies in "The Legacy of Decolonization," in *Regional Conflict and U.S. Policy: Angola and Mozambique*, ed. Richard J. Bloomfield (Algonac, MI: Reference Publications, Inc., 1988), 7-39. Maxwell noted that Mozambique provided twenty-five percent of the Republic's mining labor force. In addition to South Africa, the ports of Maputo and Beira also served Rhodesia and Malawi, and 2/3 of Mozambique's rolling stock was used for international traffic associated with these three southern African nations. *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶¹⁶ As quoted in Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 275.

aggravated by the uncertain political and military situation in Angola, where three liberation groups were vying for power, and the insurgent activities of the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO).

SWAPO, which waged guerrilla warfare against South Africa's illegal occupation of South West Africa, frequently operated out of southeastern Angola. Prior to the Portuguese coup, Lisbon had given Pretoria a green light to conduct operations against the liberation movement's Angolan camps. However, in September of 1974, the new Lisbon government informed the South African government that no more cross-border operations would be allowed. As a result, "In November SWAPO camps of up to seventy men were already in place.' Unrest increased in Namibia, particularly among Ovambos, and by the end of 1974 more than 3,000 youths had gone to Angola, many of them to join SWAPO."⁶¹⁷

Pretoria's Decision to Assist the Anti-MPLA Coalition

Given South African fears that the MPLA might win in Angola and then support SWAPO, the South Africans decided to extend a helping hand to the ostensibly pro-Western Jonas Savimbi of UNITA and Holden Roberto of the FNLA. Savimbi was the

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 273. Gleijeses' information is based on a book by Commander Sophie du Preez entitled *Avontuur*. Du Preez was a member of the supervisory committee formed in 1978 to oversee the writing of the "official" story of the South African involvement in Angola and had access to government documents on the intervention, code named Operation Savannah. The Ovambos were the largest ethnic group in South West Africa and southern Angola.

first to come courting, as he began a series of regular meetings with mid-level South African officials as early as February 1975. Following a meeting in London, in April, in which Savimbi promised not to support SWAPO if he came to power in Angola, Pretoria gave him a small amount of weapons and some financial support. Meanwhile, Holden Roberto was also in contact with the South Africans. After expressing his dislike for SWAPO and his desire for friendly relations with Pretoria, he also received some military and financial assistance⁶¹⁸

Both F. J. du Toit Spies, whom Pretoria commissioned to write the official version of *Operasie Savannah* (Operation Savannah) in 1978, and historian James Roherty tell us that in late May, Prime Minister Vorster asked the SADF and BOSS to provide a joint assessment of the Angolan situation. They submitted their finished report to the prime minister on June 25. According to Spies, it “concluded that civil war in Angola was inevitable and that the MPLA would win, with Soviet help. Only South African assistance to a united FNLA-UNITA front....might prevent an MPLA victory.” The

⁶¹⁸ Ibid., 275. South African historian James Roherty, whom Gleijeses describes as a well-informed scholar on the South African invasion, asserts that the South African-Savimbi relationship dated back to 1966 when Savimbi formed UNITA after leaving the FNLA, in 1964, in anger and disgust with Holden Roberto. “This is the same year in which John Vorster becomes Prime Minister of the RSA...and P W Botha, Minister of Defense. While maintaining contact with FNLA, Pretoria from this point on (well ahead of Washington) identifies UNITA’s charismatic and accomplished *commandante* as the preferred option in Angola.” James M. Roherty, *State Security in South Africa: Civil-Military Relations under P. W. Botha* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1992), 35.

report also noted that if Pretoria took a hands-off stance, this “would without doubt encourage a takeover by a pro-communist force friendly to SWAPO.”⁶¹⁹

As previously discussed, in early July 1975, the MPLA drove the FNLA and UNITA out of Luanda and began its major offensive against them in northern and central Angola. As the military situation for the anti-MPLA coalition rapidly deteriorated, Pretoria again took quick action. Prime Minister Vorster asked his SADF Director of Operations, General Constand Viljoen, and the head of BOSS, General Hendrik van den Bergh, to lay out an arms package for both Savimbi and Roberto in the amount of \$14.1 million. On July 14, after the prime minister had received the recommended weapons list, he approved it. His only condition, according to Spies, was “that the weapons be bought abroad in order to hide Pretoria’s involvement. The decision had been reached without any dissent.”⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁹ F. J. du Toit Spies, *Operasie Savannah, Angola 1975-1976* (Pretoria: S. A. Weermang, 1989), 63-64, as cited in Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 176; Roherty, *State Security in South Africa*, 73.

⁶²⁰ Spies, *Operasie Savannah*, 64-65, as cited in Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*. See also Roherty, *State Security in South Africa*, 73. Pretoria’s intervention in Angola unfolded in a series of escalating military steps in support of the FNLA and UNITA and increased incursions into southern Angola in hot pursuit of SWAPO insurgents. In order to facilitate both the FNLA’s and UNITA’s ability to use the weapons provided by the \$14.1 million, in early to mid-September 1975, two small units of SADF advisers, trainers and logistic experts began to arrive in southern and central Angola. The first group trained some of Daniel Chipenda’s FNLA forces in a camp located about 30 miles north of the Namibian border. The second group trained UNITA in a base near Calombo, a small town in Angola’s central highlands. In return for this hands-on support, both the FNLA and UNITA promised to assist South Africa in expelling SWAPO from its Angolan bases. They fulfilled their promise, as Gleijeses notes. “Throughout September, the SADF launched raids across the border to eliminate SWAPO. UNITA and the FNLA, ‘both now allies of the Republic of South Africa, helped locate the SWAPO bases...The Portuguese said nothing.’” *Conflicting Missions*, 295. The continuing success of the MPLA’s northern and southern offensives, which resulted in

The Nature of the US-RSA Relationship in Angola

James Roherty maintains that Prime Minister Vorster decided to “sound out”

Washington in late June after he had received the SADF-BOSS assessment of the

Angolan situation and before he made his final decision on 14 July. He further notes that

Pretoria’s approach included the suggestion that the two governments collaborate in their

response to the Angolan conflict, including sending in troops.⁶²¹ If Roherty is correct,

the Popular Movement’s control of twelve of Angola’s sixteen provinces by mid-September, brought a deeper South African commitment. The reality of the military weakness of UNITA was demonstrated in early October when the MPLA, advancing toward Savimbi’s capital at Nova Lisboa (now Huambo, in central Angola), crushed a South African-led UNITA unit. Spies wrote that this encounter “made it clear that UNITA...was not able to resist the FAPLA [the MPLA’s military wing] without help. The choice lay between active South African military participation on the one hand and – in effect – acceptance of an MPLA victory on the other.” Ibid. According to one South African historian, Pretoria’s decision to intervene on a major scale occurred in early October, probably just after the defeat of the SADF-UNITA unit on October 5. Robin Hallett, “The South African Intervention in Angola, 1975-76,” *African Affairs* 77, no. 308 (July 1978), 366. Task Force Zulu led off the large-scale invasion on or about October 14. Its mission, according to military historian Helmoed-Romer Heitman was to gain as much ground as possible before November 11, Angola’s scheduled Independence Day. Helmoed-Romer Heitman, *South African War Machine* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1985), 171. The task force raced northward up Angola’s coast, while another unit, Task Force Foxbat, advanced quickly to the northwest through southern and central Angola. The MPLA, assisted at first by its Cuban trainers and advisers, and commencing on November 9, by newly arriving Cuban combatants, eventually stopped both task forces before they reached Luanda. Thereafter, the MPLA went on the offensive. Some twenty miles north of Luanda, the MPLA and their Cuban allies routed Holden Roberto’s FNLA, supported by the Zairian 7th and 4th Battalions and CIA and SADF advisers, at the battle of Guifangondo on November 11. Roberto’s forces retreated hastily back to Zaire. Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 213-215, and Heitman, *South African War Machine*, 173. South Africa began a withdrawal in mid-January 1976. By late January, it was largely completed, although a number of SADF troops remained in Angola just north of the Namibian border. They were allegedly withdrawn by late March 1976. David B. Ottaway, “S. Africa Says Its Angolan Allies Prevented Total Victory,” *Washington Post*, February 3, 1977, sec. A, p. 16. At the height of its invasion, the total SADF commitment was at least 2,000 men, augmented by elements from Chipenda’s FNLA, UNITA, mercenaries, and Caprivian Bushmen. Heitman, *South African War Machine*, 170, and Ottaway, “S. Africa Says Its Angolan Allies Prevented Total Victory.”

⁶²¹ Roherty, *State Security in South Africa*, 36, 73. Roherty does not explain how Pretoria communicated with Washington.

this may have been the first high-level contact between Washington and Pretoria on the brewing crisis in Angola, although it is not unreasonable to suggest that there had been earlier contacts at lower levels, including liaison between the CIA station in Pretoria and BOSS.

Former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the Reagan Administration, Chester Crocker, who undoubtedly had access to the classified record on the Angolan crisis in his State Department position, supports much of what Roherty has written. He tells us, for example, that throughout the spring of 1975, Pretoria was in close contact with “all the Western and African players” in the Angolan conflict and began providing covert aid to both the FNLA and UNITA. Also “Zairean army units had started to deploy across the border into northern Angola in support of the FNLA. Washington, of course, was well aware of these moves: our winks and nods formed part of the calculus of Angola’s neighbors.”⁶²²

At this point in time (spring to early summer 1975), then, it appears that Washington and Pretoria were in regular contact over the Angolan situation and probably discussing their respective roles in support of the anti-MPLA forces. Moreover, although it may only be coincidental, President Ford authorized IAFEATURE on July 18, only four days

⁶²² Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 49.

after Prime Minister Vorster had approved South Africa's own escalated covert support to the FNLA and UNITA.

Henry Kissinger has denied any American cooperation, or "collusion" in his own words, with Pretoria. He also has claimed that the United States had no foreknowledge of South Africa's intentions to invade Angola.⁶²³ As it relates to the issue of cooperation, Kissinger's denial is most likely false. General Viljoen, the SADF's Director of Operations at the time and a close adviser to Prime Minister Vorster, much later admitted that not only had Pretoria and Washington collaborated in Angola, but also that South Africa saw the partnership as beneficial. "South Africa was isolated. Although it was done secretly, it was good for South Africa to be cooperating with a big force like the U.S.A., even though it was clandestine."⁶²⁴

Additionally, we know from John Stockwell's account that the CIA was very engaged with its South African counterpart – BOSS. He tells us, for example, that after IAFEATURE's authorization in July, Jim Potts, the head of the CIA's Africa Division, met twice in Washington with General Van den Bergh, the head of BOSS. Moreover, "The COS, Pretoria, was ordered to brief BOSS about IAFEATURE, and nearly all CIA

⁶²³ See Kissinger's testimony in Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 13. Also, Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 820.

⁶²⁴ *CNN Cold War*, "Episode 17: Good Guys, Bad Guy" [database on-line]; available from CNN.com/specials/cold.war/episodes.

intelligence reports on the subject were relayed to Pretoria so his briefings would be accurate and up to date.”⁶²⁵

In addition to this liaison between the two intelligence organizations, cooperation also occurred at the operational level. William Thoms, a former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst, confirms Stockwell’s claims that CIA paramilitary experts worked side-by-side with SADF trainers and advisers in support of both UNITA and the FNLA inside Angola.⁶²⁶ He also tells us that, in addition to the Zairian Air Force, the South Africans provided air transports to carry American weapons from Kinshasa into Angola. This latter cooperative effort was made necessary because, according to Stockwell, the CIA was unable to support the logistics pipeline with its own contracted aircraft.⁶²⁷ That there was cooperation between Washington and Pretoria, then, seems obvious, despite official denials.

The second part of Kissinger’s denial – that the United had no foreknowledge of the large-scale invasion – is probably also false. My assessment is based on the following evidence. Piero Gleijeses’s 1995 interviews with Edward Mulcahy, acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, and Joseph Sisco, Under Secretary of State in 1975, reveal that Kissinger had talks with the South Africans just before their mid-October

⁶²⁵ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 187. COS refers to “Chief of Station,” the top CIA official in Pretoria.

⁶²⁶ William Thom, “Angola’s 1975-1976 Civil War,” *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement* 7 (Autumn 1998): 13.

⁶²⁷ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 59.

invasion.⁶²⁸ Neither was privy to these discussions and unable, or unwilling, to provide any details about them. However, Mulcahy, obviously kept in the dark on this highly sensitive issue, told Gleijeses that a few days after the invasion “I was told by a very senior administration official that Kissinger should have let me know about the talks he was having with the South Africans.”

Sisco was circumspect. “‘A reasonable premise,’ he told me with a smile, ‘is that while it cannot be demonstrated that the administration explicitly took steps to encourage South Africa’s intervention, it certainly did not discourage it.’”⁶²⁹ His statement, of course, is a classic example of “plausible denial,” probably underscored by his belief that any evidence – at least from the American side – connecting Washington to Pretoria’s invasion would not enter the public domain for years, if ever.

The South Africans Speak

However, neither he, nor anyone else in Washington, had control over what the South Africans might say. Given the fact that Pretoria felt betrayed both by its supposed black African allies and the United States after the Tunney Amendment’s passage, much of

⁶²⁸ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 298-299.

⁶²⁹ Ibid. Just how Kissinger’s contacts with the South Africans occurred is unknown. Given the sensitivity of the issue, he probably used some sort of his preferred back-channel communications.

what they later had to say about the invasion could be construed as a case of “sour grapes.”⁶³⁰ That, however, does not mean that what they have said is any less truthful.

In the immediate aftermath of the South African invasion and withdrawal, Pretoria was exceptionally discreet, especially about the nature of its relationship with other members of the anti-MPLA coalition. Despite this initial restraint, it wasn’t long before South African officials began to let slip little details of the Washington-Pretoria partnership.

The first indication that Washington had asked for the South African invasion came from Prime Minister Vorster, who gave an interview in May 1976 to *Newsweek* Senior Editor Arnaud Borchgrave. In response to a question about the United States having “solicited” South Africa’s help in defeating the Russians and Cubans, the prime minister responded, “I do not want to comment on that...But if you are making the statement, I won’t call you a liar.” The follow-up question asked if it would be accurate to state that Henry Kissinger had given Pretoria the green light for its military operation in Angola

⁶³⁰ South Africa later claimed that several black African national leaders, in addition to the United States, encouraged its intervention. These included Zaire’s Mobutu, Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Felix Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast, and apparently Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia. On this subject see Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 186; Nicolas Ashford, “South African Learning How Their Country’s Troops Became Involved in the Angolan Conflict,” *The Times* (London), February 17, 1976, 6; Heitman, *South African War Machine*, 170. As noted by Gleijeses, there is disagreement over the Zambia-South African connection. Still, most of the available evidence indicates that Kaunda asked Pretoria to intervene on behalf of Savimbi. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 298, and note 126, page 480.

and that several black African presidents had given “their blessings” for the invasion.

Vorster replied, “If you say that of your own accord, I will not call you a liar.”⁶³¹

Almost two years later, on April 17, 1978, Defense Minister P.W. Botha was apparently still piqued about having been left high and dry by the Americans. Referring to the South African invasion of Angola, he told parliament that the operation was carried out with the approval and knowledge of the Americans. However, “They left us in the lurch. We are going to retell that story: the story must be told of how we, with their knowledge, went in there and operated in Angola with their knowledge, how they encouraged us to act and, when we had nearly reached the climax, we were ruthlessly left in the lurch by an undertaking that was broken.”⁶³²

The South Africans eventually did provide their official account, but that occurred some years later, after the end of both the apartheid system and the Cold War. In these latter revelations, high-ranking officials, such as General Viljoen and Pik Botha, the South African ambassador in Washington from 1975-1977, continued to claim that Pretoria had conducted Operation Savannah at the urging of the United States. In a 1997 interview, Botha revealed, “The United States, at the highest level, requested assistance,

⁶³¹ Interview with Prime Minister John Vorster, “I Won’t Call You a Liar,” interview by Arnaud de Borchgrave, *Newsweek*, May 17, 1976, 53.

⁶³² Cited in Roherty, *State Security in South Africa*, 59, note 5. The exact quote is from Botha, April 17, 1978, Republic of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates*, col. 4852. See also Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 299, and note 130, page 480.

or rather requests South Africa to go in and assist UNITA.”⁶³³ At the time of the Angolan conflict, however, he, like many of his associates in the American diplomatic community, had been kept in the dark about the exact nature of the Pretoria-Washington relationship, as the following discussion illustrates.

As the debate over the Tunney Amendment elevated that conflict to a major foreign policy issue in late November 1975, Ambassador Botha informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria that the American Congress would vote to end the American involvement by cutting off further funding to the FNLA and UNITA. The Minister, Hilgar Muller, then instructed Botha to telephone the prime minister to explain his assessment of the political mood in Washington as the date for the Senate’s vote on the Tunney Amendment, December 18, approached.

It was during this telephone conversation that Prime Minister Vorster told his Washington ambassador of the earlier American request for South Africa’s assistance. The prime minister apparently did not know that Botha was an outsider to the carefully guarded communications loop between Washington and Pretoria on Angola. He asked, “‘But...’ He used to call me Puck, you see, ‘Puck, but are you not aware of this request?’” And I said, “no, not at all. It was certainly not routed through me.” The ambassador then reiterated his assessment that the Congress would terminate funding for the American

⁶³³ *CNN Cold War*, “Episode 17: Good Guys, Bad Guys.”

involvement. Vorster refused to believe Botha, and told him, “‘But look, we have the opposite information from the highest level,’ and that is that the United States would continue to support our effort to keep the Cubans as far north as possible.” Botha responded, “Sir, I do not know what your sources are, but I’m living close to Capitol Hill; I know the senators, I know quite a number of congressmen; I know the sentiments there, and they vote the budget, and they are going to withdraw Dr. Kissinger’s funds.”⁶³⁴ This was the only mention of a proper name – not surprisingly, Kissinger – in the conversation, as recalled by former Ambassador Botha.

It should come as no shock that the South African ambassador in Washington had not been privy to the most sensitive details of the Pretoria-Washington partnership in Angola. Kissinger’s preferred back-channel communications had also kept his acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Ed Mulcahy, in the dark, as previously discussed. However, it remains a mystery as to how Washington, and specifically Kissinger, actually communicated with Pretoria. Piero Gleijeses tried several times to interview the American ambassador to Pretoria at that time, William Bowdler.⁶³⁵ The ambassador refused all his requests, so we do not know if he was one of the links in the back-channel communications chain. I would guess not - based on the precedence of Ambassador

⁶³⁴ “Episode 17: Good Guys, Bad Guys: Interview with Pik Botha,” January 19, 2005 [Database on-line]; available from <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-17/botha>.

⁶³⁵ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 299.

Davis' non-involvement in the American operation against the Allende government and Kissinger's propensity to work around, or outside of, the State Department as much as possible.

In sum, we know very little about the exact nature of Washington's relationship with Pretoria throughout the Angolan crisis, although it seems unlikely that the South African tail wagged the American dog. What little evidence we do have, mostly from the South Africans, points to a joint, cooperative American-South African effort early on in the conflict. By mid-September, as the MPLA's successful military offensive, abetted by Cuban trainers and advisers, threatened to destroy, or at least marginalize, both the FNLA and UNITA, Washington apparently urged an expansion of the South African role. However, and this is my own speculation, given South Africa's much more important stakes in the outcome of the civil war, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Pretoria would have made the same decision, with or without Washington's prodding.

Conclusion

There is little reason to believe that any of Washington's purported African "friends" pulled the United States into the Angolan conflict. From Washington's perspective, Zambia was a minor player in the Angolan conflict because, as Kissinger noted, Kaunda didn't have the horsepower to substantially influence the outcome of the war. Moreover, although based upon limited evidence, there is little reason to believe that South Africa

exerted undue influence on the American intervention decision. The South Africans enjoyed a working partnership with the Americans throughout the conflict, and the two coordinated their efforts in a joint venture from early on. However, as discussed, the SADF's full-scale invasion in October 1975 apparently came with American approval, and even urging, suggesting this was a case of the Washington dog wagging the South African tail, and not vice versa.

Zaire's Mobutu represents the strongest argument for the presence of a pericentric dynamic in the American decision to intervene in Angola. Zaire was very important to the American operation, especially from a logistics standpoint, as I have previously discussed, and Washington desired to mend the Zairian-American relationship after Mobutu's coup allegations and Hinton's expulsion. However, I maintain that Mobutu was no more (and no less) than an important cog in the covert operations machinery. Because his financial difficulties made him exceptionally dependent upon the United States, he was a junior, if necessary, partner in the American intervention, even if Washington, at times, appeared to tolerate his manipulative, self-serving impulses.

I believe the available evidence supports the conclusion that President Ford authorized the covert program for Angola because of a confluence of three mutually supporting circumstances mostly unrelated to pericentric dynamics. First, both the president and his foreign policy architect saw the Soviet involvement as a direct challenge to the regional

and, ultimately, global balance of power and a test of American will power. As geopolitical realists, both believed that it was important to send a strong signal to the Soviet Union that the United States was weighing in on the issue.

Secondly, this concern merged with the opportunity to reinvigorate American credibility, which both believed had been dangerously weakened by recent domestic and international crises, especially the Vietnam War, by squaring off with the Russians – the major Cold War adversary. In this scenario, admitting to Havana’s preeminent role in support of the MPLA simply wouldn’t do. The Soviet Union had to be portrayed as the leading villain while the Cubans were depicted as Soviet proxies or “Ghurkas.”⁶³⁶

Thirdly, confronting the Soviet Union in Angola, even if covertly, also presented the opportunity to revalidate American credibility and leadership within the NATO alliance

⁶³⁶ Interestingly, in early February 1976, just a few days after stressing that the Soviet Union was the main culprit and Cuba merely its client state before Senator Clark’s subcommittee hearings on Angola, Kissinger reversed his position on the Cuban role. David Binder reported that “knowledgeable officials” had told him Kissinger was now advancing the idea that “Cuba is again in the business of ‘exporting revolution,’ on its own initiative, this time to Angola.” David Binder, “Kissinger Believes Cuba ‘Exports’ Revolution Again,” *New York Times*, February 5, 1976, 12. Despite this apparent epiphany, Kissinger “reportedly” decided not to announce this publicly, “preferring instead to hold the Soviet Union primarily responsible for large-scale military intervention in Angola, including the presence of 11,000 Cuban troops there.” Binder reported the rationale for Kissinger’s decision: the United States had no leverage over Cuba, but détente gave the United States “considerable” diplomatic leverage with the Soviet Union. *Ibid.* Given this rationale, one wonders, “Why did Washington wait until November to finally approach Moscow on the Angolan crisis if, as it often stated, it was so concerned about the “massive” Soviet intervention? Moreover, if the United States had considerable diplomatic leverage with the Soviet Union, part of that leverage derived from American grain sales to the Russians. Why, then, were grain exports never used, either as a stick or carrot, to persuade the Soviets to stop their arms support to the MPLA? The simple answer to these questions is that Kissinger was determined to confront the Soviet Union over Angola, for all those reasons I have previously discussed, and that he was able to persuade the president of the necessity to do so. Moreover, President Ford wasn’t about to curtail the grain deal with the USSR during the run-up to the presidential election, thereby imperiling the agricultural-bloc vote.

and to re-energize the Washington-Beijing relationship. Although spokesmen for the Ford Administration justified the American involvement in Angola as a prudent and necessary response to Soviet aggression, the commitment side of American credibility was equally, and probably more important, to the Angolan decision. Thus, Kissinger would emphasize to his State Department colleagues that he didn't care about Angola's economic wealth or if the Soviet Union acquired a naval base in the country. What he cared about was how an American pull-out would play in Beijing and the capitals of Western Europe, and what would be the consequences for American global power and influence, "If the Europeans then say to themselves if they can't hold Luanda, how can they defend Europe?" or if, "The Chinese... say we're a country that was run out of Indochina for 50,000 men and is now being run out of Angola for less than \$50 million...how can it be in the US national interest for us to give up on Angola?"⁶³⁷

In mid-June 1975, even as Kissinger was pressing Ford for action on Angola, Mobutu's allegation of American involvement in an alleged coup and Hinton's subsequent dismissal provided a timely impetus for action. From this point onward, it was not "if" the United States would intervene in Angola, but "when" and "how."

⁶³⁷ State Department, "Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Department Policy," December 18, 1975, cited in full in Hertsgaard, "The Secret Life of Henry Kissinger."

President Ford's decision of July 18 decided the "when;" Vance's second trip to Kinshasa finalized the details of the "how" – the Mobutu Plan.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁸ There was also an important domestic factor in President Ford's decision on covert action. By "standing up to the Russians," Ford and Kissinger could demonstrate to their domestic critics that they had not lost their toughness and that their détente policy did not mean a unilateral abdication of American leadership or power. The president, no doubt, hoped that a favorable outcome in Angola, like the *Mayaguez* affair, would bump up his popularity at a critical time in the run-up to the fall 1976 elections. While Kissinger probably saw the president's re-election as important to his own job security, the opportunity to silence critics of détente was equally important.

CHAPTER 7

AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA: WHO DID WHAT, AND WHEN?

“The assumption that the United States is merely reacting to a Soviet initiative in Angola...is open to question.”

Senator Dick Clark⁶³⁹

This chapter focuses on the timelines of Soviet and American involvement in the Angolan conflict, beginning in 1974. As discussed in Chapter 5, officials of the Ford Administration asserted that the American involvement in Angola was a justifiable response to Soviet-initiated intervention, supported by the Cubans. Recapping their story, they claimed, first, that the United States stayed clear of the Angolan issue during the second half of 1974 following the Portuguese coup, despite requests for assistance from America’s African friends. Secondly, the Soviet Union allegedly resumed its support for the MPLA in August 1974, months before the the Forty Committee’s allocation of \$300,000 to Holden Roberto on January 22, 1975. As asserted by Kissinger and others, this was a modest sum, intended as a political subsidy, and it would be “absurd” to think that it “triggered all subsequent escalations.”⁶⁴⁰

Thirdly, from the signing of the Alvor accord in mid-January 1975 until the American decision to support both the FNLA and UNITA on July 18, administration officials contended that the Soviet Union significantly expanded its military support to the MPLA,

⁶³⁹ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 8.

⁶⁴⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795.

a decision that the Kremlin must have made in December or January. Additionally, the flow of arms from other Communist nations also increased. This massive influx of military equipment emboldened the MPLA. With Communist arms pouring in, the Popular Movement had little incentive to abide by the terms of the Alvor accord, and it was the first side to violate the agreement, in February 1975. The MPLA intensified its militant actions against both the FNLA and UNITA throughout the spring, finally expelling both from Luanda in early July 1975.

In sum, from a chronological viewpoint, Kissinger and others maintained that it was Soviet actions, specifically its renewed support to the MPLA, commencing in August 1974 and intensifying in the spring of 1975 that initiated the sequence of events that destroyed the Alvor agreement, led to full-scale civil war and escalated the Angolan conflict to a Cold War crisis.

What went unmentioned in the Ford Administration's official spinning, finessing and massaging of the timelines of Soviet and American involvement in Angola were several occurrences in mid-to-late 1974 that ratcheted up the potential for a violent decolonization process in Angola. These events, and not Soviet actions as alleged by the Ford Administration, set the stage for the later action-reaction cycle of external intervention. The United States played a crucial role in initiating this early sequence of developments, even as the Soviet Union was largely sitting on the sidelines while the

future of the MPLA, which it had supported since the mid-1950s, became increasingly tenuous. It is these important overtures to the later events of 1975 to which I now turn.

Prelude to American Involvement

In early 1974, Donald Easum replaced David Newsom as Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, inheriting the “Option Two” policy of his predecessor. Following the Portuguese coup in April 1974 and Lisbon’s announcement that it would begin independence negotiations with its African colonies, Easum and a handful of State Department Africanists recognized that change was coming to southern Africa and that Option Two’s assumption that “the whites are here to stay,” was no longer valid. Moreover, they realized that American policy needed to change to accommodate the new reality. Along these lines, Easum told Kissinger that the United States “should harden its position toward South Africa, push for majority rule in Rhodesia, and develop a friendly policy toward FRELIMO.”⁶⁴¹

Easum’s initial and primary focus on the Portuguese decolonization efforts was on Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. The process of negotiating independence for both commenced shortly after the coup - in late May between the PAIGC and Portugal and in early June with Mozambique’s FRELIMO. Despite some initial setbacks, disturbances,

⁶⁴¹ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 280.

and disagreements, the process in both colonies was relatively streamlined and trouble free.

Angola, in contrast, became a victim of Lisbon's internal power struggles. With Spínola's forced resignation in late September 1974, however, the MFA's leadership decided to move quickly on the Angolan independence issue. Even then, however, there were major obstacles to implementing a quick transition to independence. Lisbon still had no official ceasefire with any of the three contentious liberation movements, which continued their mutual hostilities, and the MPLA was in disarray because of its own internal power struggle, principally pitting its long-time leader, Agostinho Neto, against Daniel Chipenda. In short, the Portuguese had a knotty ball of issues to unravel before they could sit down to the table to negotiate a plan for Angola's future. The timing and direction of Angola's path to independence in the summer and autumn of 1974 were difficult to determine and explain. Easum's focus on Portugal's two other principal colonies in Africa.

This prioritization was on display in early July 1974 as he briefed Henry Kissinger on developments in Portuguese Africa. After an overview on the progress of the Portuguese-PAIGC negotiations, then on going in Algiers, Easum raised the issue of whether or not the United States should support Guinea-Bissau's admission to the UN, since eighty nations had already indicated their approval for such a step. Kissinger didn't

want to hear about it, at one point remarking, “That is really what the world needed – a country called Guinea-Bissau.” He then somewhat abruptly concluded the discussion on the colony by noting, “It is not going to be admitted with our vote until the Portuguese have given it independence.”⁶⁴²

Easum quickly changed the subject to Mozambique where he noted that while negotiations were in progress, the parties were still far apart. Kissinger, who had recently met with Portuguese Foreign Minister Mario Soares in Ottawa, seemed reasonably well-informed on the situation in Mozambique, remarking that Soares had told him that Portugal was eager to get out of Mozambique as quickly as possible. He then asked Easum if he thought the South Africans might intervene. Easum told Kissinger, “We have seen only one indication of overtures by white Portuguese in Mozambique to the South Africans. Ten members of the secret police went to South Africa and discussed possible South African support of UDI or a partition of Mozambique.” Still, he suggested, correctly, that South Africa would not support such action if black Mozambique left South Africa alone.⁶⁴³

Just before the discussion had turned to Mozambique, Kissinger had interjected that in Ottawa the Portuguese foreign minister had told him that “he has no objections if we take

⁶⁴² “The Secretary’s Principles’ and Regional Staff Meeting,” July 10, 1974, pp. 15-16 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

⁶⁴³ Ibid., pp. 16-17. UDI refers to a unilateral declaration of independence, akin to that of neighboring white-controlled Rhodesia in 1965.

up contact with the various liberation movements there...I prohibited it three weeks ago. But you can now authorize it.” Easum then advised against such a blanket policy for contact with Angola’s three liberation movements, telling Kissinger, “We would like to do this in a very ad hoc and specific way. We do not think it is time, for example, for a chief of one of our missions to have contacts with the leaders of independence groups that are vying among themselves.”⁶⁴⁴

Easum never explained his reasoning for his position on contact with Angola’s liberation movements – at least not in this meeting. I venture to guess that his advice was based on a belief that the United States should be cautious about its contacts with Angola’s three movements so as to avoid giving the impression of American favoritism towards any one, most specifically the FNLA. He undoubtedly knew that the CIA had a history of supporting Holden Roberto. Indeed, he already had to fend off pressures from the Agency’s Africa division, which wanted to revitalize its support for the FNLA and to re-open the CIA station in Luanda.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁶⁴⁵ As previously discussed, journalist Bruce Oudes and historian Piero Gleijeses have both argued that the CIA began to pressure Easum on this issue in the early summer of 1974. Oudes alleges that it was Larry Devlin, the former CIA station chief in Kinshasa and head of the Agency’s Africa division before his retirement in June 1974, who approached Easum on this issue. Oudes, “South Africa, U.S. Secrets.” Gleijeses, who interviewed Easum, writes that it was both Devlin, first, and then Jim Potts, Devlin’s successor at Langley, who tried to get Easum’s support for the FNLA and who wanted to reopen the CIA station in Luanda. The station did reopen, in March 1975, but that was only after Easum had been asked to resign and went off to Nigeria as the new American ambassador. Easum told Gleijeses that Potts said Holden Roberto was a “good guy, who would play an important role, and we should strengthen that role.”

Moreover, Easum's own opinion, and that of at least some of the individuals under him in the Africa Bureau, was that the interests of the United States in Angola would be best served by being supportive of the MPLA.⁶⁴⁶ Further, given that Kissinger, referring to Mario Soares, had stated "*he* has no objections," (author's emphasis) Easum may have thought that Soares was speaking for himself and not for Lisbon, which at the very moment was undergoing another political shakeup and change in government. Whatever the case, if the United States carelessly inserted itself into the unsettled Angolan situation, it could further exacerbate Lisbon's ability to peacefully resolve the thorny issues involved in the colony's road to independence. In fact, that is exactly what happened, as will be shortly discussed.

As the discussion finally turned to Angola, Easum told Kissinger that there was "complete disunity on the part of the liberations groups." He reported that one group,

Easum, however, disagreed, and to Easum's knowledge, Potts did not press the issue at a higher level. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 281. Had Easum concurred in the CIA's recommendation, the next step would have been to present a joint State-CIA proposal for the Forty Committee's consideration. Tom Killoran, the new Consulate General in Luanda, having arrived in country in mid-1974, did, of course, have contact with all three liberation movements. He sent Washington several cables detailing his personal knowledge and impressions of the three movements and their leaders. Killoran argued that the MPLA was best qualified to govern an independent Angola. The leadership of the MPLA was better educated, better motivated, politically astute and less tribal. Neto was a moderate, and although many in the Popular Movement were ostensibly Marxist, they were closer to European radical socialism. Gleijeses, "Interview with Robert W. Hultslander," former CIA Station Chief in Luanda, Angola.

⁶⁴⁶ During Easum's interview with Piero Gleijeses, he remarked, "My long-held view was that Frelimo, the PAIGC and the MPLA had valid objectives and that their ideology was something we didn't need to worry about, and that we needed to be supportive...I believed that the MPLA was a better partner for the US than the FNLA." He also told Gleijeses that he had discussed Jim Potts' desire to increase support to the FNLA and reopen the Luanda station with his "people," and they had agreed with his assessment of the MPLA and FNLA. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 281.

presumably UNITA, which at the time had an informal ceasefire with the Portuguese, had quit fighting. A second faction, the MPLA, couldn't decide whether to continue fighting or not. However, the FNLA, "perhaps the strongest," was increasing its military activity. Mobutu was supporting the group and had just brought in Chinese military trainers for the FNLA. Kissinger's one-word response was "Okay," after which he changed the topic, apparently having had his fill of African affairs for the day.⁶⁴⁷

The CIA and the FNLA, 1974

Unknown to Easum during that 10 July meeting - who would certainly have strongly objected - but probably not to Kissinger, the CIA had already taken action to enhance its support to Holden Roberto and his FNLA.⁶⁴⁸ Without an official recommendation from the Forty Committee, which, by law, was required only for "major and/or politically

⁶⁴⁷ "The Secretary's Principles' and Regional Staff Meeting," July 10, 1974, p. 17.

⁶⁴⁸ That the State Department did not know that the CIA, via its Kinshasa station, had begun to dole out more money to Holden Roberto was not unprecedented, of course. As I previously discussed, in early 1961, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) found out for the first time that the CIA had been giving Roberto "financial assistance for some years," and that "the Department first learned of this connection last March when the Agency raised with the Department the question as to whether it would be in the U.S. interest to support the UPA itself." The UPA was the predecessor to the FNLA. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. XXI, *Africa*, "Letter from the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)," May 23, 1961 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995), 543. Also, there was a more recent precedent. During the effort to discredit and destroy the Allende government in Chile, from 1970-1973, Nixon, Kissinger and the CIA kept the State Department, including the American ambassador in Santiago, completely in the dark. In fact, the three-year effort was never presented to the formal Forty Committee for its consideration. Nathaniel Davis, the ambassador at the time, was being truthful when he denied having any hand in the military coup that unseated the Allende government.

sensitive covert action programs,”⁶⁴⁹ the CIA station in Kinshasa could only provide a small increase in the yearly stipend then allotted to Roberto, allegedly for intelligence purposes. As John Stockwell tells us, however, it was “enough for word to get around that the CIA was dealing itself into the race.”⁶⁵⁰ The CIA’s Angolan desk officer, the anonymous Brenda MacElhinney, added her own words to Stockwell’s presumption that the CIA’s action would not go unnoticed. She informed him that the “flagrant, semiovert activities” of the CIA’s station in Kinshasa “ensured that American support of the FNLA would be widely known.”⁶⁵¹ This July action by the CIA, or at least its station in Kinshasa, no doubt caught the attention of Soviet officials in Kinshasa, although they may not have been aware of the extent of the CIA’s increased commitment to Roberto and were left guessing as to the intent.

They were certainly also aware of the presence of a large contingent of Chinese advisers who were training the FNLA, since Kinshasa had publicly announced its arrival

⁶⁴⁹ U.S. Congress, Senate, Staff Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operation with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Covert Action in Chile, 1963-1973*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975, 41, as cited in Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 281. Gleijeses notes that the increased amount was \$10,000 per month, citing “Mulcahy to SecState,” May 13, 1975, Policy Planning Staff, Box 368, National Archives. Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 67 and 258. Stockwell lists July 7, 1974 as the date of the initiation of the funding increase to Roberto. No doubt, at least some of the increased finances came from the CIA’s Kinshasa station free funds which, given the large size of the station, were probably substantial. Stockwell is again enlightening on the special categories of available money at CIA stations. As explained, while he was the Chief of Station in Bujumbura, Burundi, a small operation, he had “\$900 per year in ‘representational’ funds, plus an unlimited amount of ‘operational entertainment’ funds, plus a virtually unlimited fund for agent’s salaries, bribes, and gifts. Altogether I had about \$30,000 cash each year to dole out or spend to enhance my effectiveness.” Ibid., 63.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 67.

– and with some fanfare. In light of the Sino-Soviet rivalry, especially in the Third World, and the fear that anti-Soviet forces would be strengthened in sub-Saharan Africa if the MPLA were marginalized, these events no doubt concerned the Kremlin.⁶⁵²

Further, all this was occurring during an extended hiatus in the Kremlin's support for the MPLA, mainly because of the movement's internal power struggle.⁶⁵³ Thus, the evolving situation between the United States and the FNLA, which further solidified the CIA's historical ties to the FNLA leader and vice versa, as well as the close relationship

⁶⁵² The China Factor was clearly on the mind of Kremlin decision makers before and during the buildup to the Angolan Civil War. Anatoly Dobrynin, former Soviet ambassador to the United States, has remarked, for example, "the Politburo felt we had to show the flag against China in Africa so as not to be seen by international communist or democratic movements as being idle in postcolonial areas." Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence, Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962-1986)* (New York: Time Books, 1995), 362. The Soviet Union also consistently insinuated Chinese-American collusion in Angola, which was not true, although there was certainly a convergence of interests, at least until the major South African invasion in October 1975. By way of example, *Pravda* reported in July 1975 that "The duplicitous stand taken by Peking, which claims to be a 'friend' of those fighting for independence and progress but in reality is collaborating with American imperialist agents and giving military aid to the henchmen of neocolonialism, is arousing increasing indignation in the African countries." S. Kulik, "Peking's Subversive Activities," *Pravda*, July 18, 1975, 5; reported in *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* XXVII, no. 29 (August 13, 1975): 6. For an excellent analysis of the Chinese factor in Soviet decision making on Angola, see Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, Chapter 15, "Competition in the Third World: Angola, 1975-1976," especially 582-585. Garthoff argues that China's support for the FNLA was the Soviet Union's primary consideration in 1974. This was overtaken by their concerns about American involvement in Angola during the latter half of 1975. Further, he supports the contention that while the Soviets saw a rivalry with both the Chinese and the Americans for influence in Angola, they also believed that the two were acting in collusion against the Soviet Union throughout the Third World. *Ibid.*, 585, 583.

⁶⁵³ Lucio Lara, Neto's top political adviser, told Gleijeses during an interview that the Chinese support for the MPLA in the early 1970s, which included political and military training of a small MPLA cadre in China and military training of MPLA guerrillas in Tanzania, may have contributed to the Soviet suspension of aid. However, Lara added, "it was primarily due to our internal difficulties." Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 243.

between the Chinese and the FNLA, probably prompted the Soviets to reassess their relationship with the MPLA.

That Easum was unaware of the CIA's increased support to Holden Roberto in mid-1974 is not surprising since he had already told the CIA that he and the African Bureau would not support the Agency's plans. He probably believed that the subject had been laid to rest, because he told Gleijeses that as far as he knew, Jim Potts did not take the issue up his chain of command. However, there is reason to at least suggest that Potts, or more likely, William Colby, apprised Kissinger about the enhanced financial assistance to Holden Roberto.

While the CIA may have believed that the small amount of the additional support did not require a determination by the Forty Committee, William Colby, new to the DCI position, perhaps desired at least an unofficial approval of the action. Since Kissinger, in his position as national security adviser to the president, chaired the Forty Committee, it would make sense for Colby to inform him and to at least receive his sanction on the impending action. Then too, although Easum has stated that he believed Jim Potts did not take the issue of increased support to Holden any further, Gleijeses suggests this may not have been true. In his interview with an anonymous, senior CIA official who was involved in the Angolan operation, "Y" said he believed that Potts had, in fact, discussed the issue with Colby. He could not confirm that Colby had taken further action,

however.⁶⁵⁴ It is not unreasonable to assume that Colby brought it up with Kissinger, outside the formal Forty Committee structure, which by 1974 had evolved into nothing more than a rubber stamp organization, meeting only infrequently, and under the complete control of Henry Kissinger.⁶⁵⁵

Even if Colby did not approach Kissinger on the issue during the summer of 1974, given that Kissinger's attention was focused on Watergate and the impending resignation of the president, and the CIA instead took action on its own initiative (not without precedent),⁶⁵⁶ Kissinger knew of the July 1974 increase of support by at least mid-May of 1975. As Gleijeses tells us, on May 13, 1975, Edward Mulcahy of the State department's Africa Bureau informed him about the July 1974 increase of \$10,000 per month to

⁶⁵⁴ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 281.

⁶⁵⁵ William R. Corson, *The Rise of the American Intelligence Empire* (New York: The Dial Press/James Wade Books, 1977), 413. Corson's analysis of the intelligence community's role, especially that of the CIA, during the Nixon White House concludes that both Nixon and Kissinger believed that the Forty Committee should, and would, be circumvented under certain circumstances, such as a "truly covert operation (like the military coup d'état in Chile)." Ibid. As presidential historian Robert Dallek tells us, the formal Forty Committee was not involved in the decision to discredit and destroy the Allende government in Chile. Rather, Nixon directly authorized the operation during an Oval Office meeting with Kissinger, Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms, and Attorney General John Mitchell. Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 235. See also Macy and Kaplan, Doc. 57, "Meeting with President on Chile at 1525 Sept 14 '70," 168. Nixon and Kissinger obviously desired full control over the covert program, with Kissinger acting as Nixon's "point man in managing the CIA's Chilean operation." Moreover, "Nixon was also determined to hide his policy from State and Defense," both members of the Forty Committee. Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 234.

⁶⁵⁶ In late April 1976, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (the Church Committee) released its heavily censored report on U.S. intelligence activities. One of the Committee's findings was that the CIA had conducted about 900 major or politically sensitive covert programs since 1961, plus several thousand lesser operations. Referring to the latter, the report noted, "A great proportion of the operations...were never subject to review outside the CIA." "Senate Panel's Report on Intelligence Activities," May 1, 1976 [Database on-line]; available from *World News Digest Facts on File*.

Roberto.⁶⁵⁷ This gives the lie to the Ford Administration's argument that the United States did not become involved in the Angolan affair until the January 1975 authorization of political funding to Holden Roberto.

Efforts to Eliminate the MPLA

The next important events in this narrative on American involvement in Angola in 1974 were the meetings on the island of Sal, hosted by General Spínola in mid-September, and in Kinshasa in early October, with Mobutu as the host aboard his personal yacht (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of these meetings). The Zairian president and the recently American-enriched Holden Roberto were at the center of both of these gatherings, which notably excluded representatives from the Agostinho Neto wing of the MPLA.

It is important to remember at this crucial juncture that Holden Roberto's FNLA had rightfully earned the reputation as the most belligerent of the three liberation movements, especially in its relationship with the MPLA, and in this it received the full support of Zaire. The history of FNLA-MPLA hostilities dated back at least to the early 1960s, when the Zairian government threw the Popular Movement out of Kinshasa (then Leopoldville). It then established its new headquarters across the Congo River in Brazzaville. Thereafter, the FNLA repeatedly attacked MPLA fighters as they tried to

⁶⁵⁷ "Mulcahy to SecState," May 13, 1975, Policy Planning Staff, Box 368, National Archives, cited in Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 281.

enter northern Angola to carry out operations against the Portuguese, to the extent that its operations in the area were largely circumscribed.

The Popular Movement did enjoy some military success against the Portuguese in Cabinda, where the FNLA's presence was minimal, and in 1966-1967, it opened an eastern Angolan front from bases in the newly independent Zambia. Even there, however, it met with FNLA hostility, and its guerrilla forces engaged in clashes with the National front (and also UNITA) as often as it did with the Portuguese.⁶⁵⁸

The Neto wing's exclusion from both the Sal and Kinshasa meetings, then, was in keeping with both Zairian and FNLA efforts to dilute the MPLA's presence in Angola's future. Much speculation has surrounded the purpose and results of these two meetings, but informed opinions, ranging across the political spectrum, almost unanimously agree that one of the objectives was to eliminate the Neto faction as a political actor in Angola.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁸ John Marcum notes that even though there was continuing animosity between the FNLA and UNITA, in eastern Angola the two seemed to have a tacit agreement to avoid military clashes with each other, but not with the MPLA. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II, 211-212. Marcum, who spent time with the FNLA inside Angola in the late 1960s, also described the FNLA as "the movement most committed to a military strategy." Ibid., 257. Interestingly, on July 13, just days after the CIA had "dealt itself into the race," Roberto's propensity for militancy, in words and deeds, came through loud and clear in a declaration from his Kinshasa stronghold. He vowed to increase the FNLA's military operations in Angola and to keep on fighting "for another 13 years if necessary." Thomas A. Johnson, "Angolan Rebels Refuse to Form a Joint Front for Truce Talks," *New York Times*, July 14, 1974, 12.

⁶⁵⁹ See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the various "theories" on the purpose of the two meetings. Historian Norrie MacQueen's analysis of the meetings basically dismisses the various conspiracy theories. She ultimately concludes, however, that the Sal meeting was part of the staunchly anti-Communist Spínola's plan, assisted by Zaire's Mobutu, to prevent the transfer of power in Angola to what he believed was a pro-

Following the Kinshasa meeting and the October 14 ceasefire between the FNLA and Lisbon, trained FNLA combatants reportedly moved into northern Angola. Roberto's "silent invasion" supports the idea that the participants in the Sal and Kinshasa meetings had decided that Holden Roberto's FNLA was to play the major role in Angola's future, either through intimidation or use of his military forces as necessary. As sources told African journalist Godwin Matatu, "Holden's army is his political ace, and he will not hesitate to play it." The troop movement, allegedly taken in support of impending political activities inside Angola, was part of a strategy "to strengthen Roberto's claims to the leadership of a provisional government."⁶⁶⁰

As the FNLA moved in force into northern Angola, its militant reputation was borne out. FNLA guerrillas, largely ethnic Bakongo, attacked migrant Ovimbundu coffee workers, causing them to flee to nearby towns or back to their ethnic homeland in central and southern Angola. Despite this violence, the Portuguese military forces in the region maintained the newly concluded ceasefire with the FNLA and reportedly did nothing to stop the attacks against civilian workers.⁶⁶¹

Soviet movement, as had happened in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 168.

⁶⁶⁰ Matatu, "Angola: When the Guns Begin to Flower," 45.

⁶⁶¹ Thomas A. Johnson, "Laborers Fleeing Farms in Angola," *New York Times*, October 20, 1974, 19. Johnson, who reported extensively on Angola from both Kinshasa and Luanda during the summer and fall of 1974, noted that as many as one third of the 100,000 migrant workers had fled the violence, "leaving behind dim prospects for future coffee harvests." Ibid. Savimbi, of course, was an Ovimbundu, and these laborers were a part of his ethnic base.

The FNLA, the first movement to sign a formal ceasefire, was also the first to arrive in Luanda, in early November, where it set up political offices. *New York Times* correspondent Thomas Johnson reported from Luanda on the National Front's arrival, noting, "Certainly better outfitted and apparently better organized than their rivals, the delegations political activists were backed up here by about 70 well-armed and newly uniformed soldiers. Some 200 more soldiers are billeted just outside the city." On Wednesday, November 13, an additional 200 FNLA political activists arrived via an Air Zaire DC-10.⁶⁶² Reflecting on the apparent prosperity of the FNLA contingent, Johnson noted that the movement's principal supporter was Zaire, hence the DC-10, but that rumors abounded that United States was also supporting the FNLA through Zaire. While American officials in Zaire, presumably embassy personnel, had denied the United States was in contact with or provided aid to Holden Roberto, other "informed" American and guerrilla sources contradicted the denial. One American told Johnson, "We would be fools not to back the F.N.L.A. with Russia so chummy with the M.P.L.A."⁶⁶³

The first MPLA delegation, headed by Neto's top political adviser, Lucio Lara, arrived on November 8, and the first of UNITA's contingent arrived two days later. Violence in Luanda erupted nearly simultaneously with the arrival of the liberation movements' political cadres, as all three movements began actively recruiting new

⁶⁶² Thomas A. Johnson, "One Rebel Group Gains in Angola," *New York Times*, November 24, 1974, 7.

⁶⁶³ Ibid.

supporters throughout the city, but especially in the musseques (slums), a traditional stronghold of the MPLA. The FNLA largely blamed the Neto wing of the MPLA for instigating the fighting. The MPLA in Luanda denied that its leadership had initiated the violence and denounced it, but there is little doubt that Popular Movement partisans in Luanda's musseques were involved, perhaps initiating some of the fighting and certainly retaliating. However, on-scene Portuguese officials recognized that they, along with the three liberation factions, had little control over the situation and "what went on inside the vast slums."⁶⁶⁴

In his testimony before Senator Clark's African Affairs subcommittee in early February 1976, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, William Schaufele, noted that the MPLA had received thousands of Soviet-supplied AK-47s in the fall of 1974 for its supporters in the "ghettoes," termed "People's Power" (Poder Popular), which acted as an auxiliary to the MPLA's regular military force. He remarked that these assault weapons were used in the November violence, intimating the MPLA was largely responsible for initiating the violence.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶⁴ Thomas A. Johnson, "A Coalition Rule in Angola Put Off," *New York Times*, November 14, 1974, 6. On the violence in Luanda, which continued sporadically throughout November, see also, "50 Casualties Feared in New Angola Violence," *The Times* (London), November 8, 1974, 9; Thomas A. Johnson, "Violence on Wane in Angolan Capital after 50 Are Killed," *New York Times*, November 12, 1974, 6, and "Toll is Put at 100 in Angola Capital," November 13, 1974, 11; "Violence in Luanda Delays Independence," *New York Times*, November 17, 1974, 245.

⁶⁶⁵ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 184. Administration spokesmen, alleging that the MPLA was emboldened by the Soviet support it was receiving, consistently blamed the

The fact of the matter is, it was (and remains) unclear who was fighting and killing whom. The leader of the UNITA delegation, identified as Dr. Fernando Wilson, denied, incorrectly, that any supporters of the three liberation movements were fighting one another, instead indicting the Portuguese who, he said, “cannot control their soldiers.”⁶⁶⁶ However, from the available reporting on the violence, it appears that some of it occurred between Neto and Chipenda supporters in the musseques. Other violent outbreaks probably resulted from, as the Portuguese claimed, “banditry and criminals,”⁶⁶⁷ and some was black on white and vice versa, a continuation of the July-August uprising in the musseques, where half of the capital city’s black Africans were estimated to reside.

That aside, Swedish journalist Per Wastberg was in Luanda during November as the three delegations arrived and violence broke out throughout Luanda. Along with members of a Swedish aid delegation, eyewitnesses to these November events, he claims that the FNLA was largely behind the disorder and chaos. He reported, for example, that what he suspected were FNLA supporters, sometimes wearing MPLA badges and identifying themselves as MPLA, committed a large number of robberies and assaults.

MPLA for initiating the violence in Luanda in the fall of 1974 and throughout the spring and summer following the January 1975 Alvor agreement. In contrast, they exonerated Holden Roberto’s FNLA, which had moved in force into northern Angola in October and November, attacking civilian laborers along the way, from perpetrating any violence except in retaliation.

⁶⁶⁶ Johnson, “Violence on Wane in Angolan Capital after 50 Are Killed.”

⁶⁶⁷ The reason the Portuguese officials attributed at least some of the violence to criminals probably relates to the many still at-large prisoners who escaped from Luanda’s main prison in June. “Fifty Casualties Feared in New Angola Violence.”

Moreover, he observed what seemed to be coordination between certain disruptive actions and the quick appearance of FNLA uniformed troops:

In the city district where the MPLA is strongest, shots are fired. At least fifty people die, hundreds are wounded. When FNLA troops arrive on the spot, the shooting stops as if at a given sign. The water supply is turned off in one part of the city; the FNLA appears with water carts. There is a bus strike. The FNLA school buses turn up with the words written on them, 'Gift from the FNLA. Brother if you have money pay; if you haven't, just get in.' Doctors, arms, money come pouring in from Kinshasa.⁶⁶⁸

As Luanda erupted in violence, the recently ousted top MPLA military commander, Daniel Chipenda, who had opened offices in Kinshasa in early October at Mobutu's invitation, added fuel to the fire by attacking the legitimacy of the Neto wing of the movement. Holden Roberto, his newly found ally, supported him in this endeavor. Officials from both Chipenda's splinter organization and the FNLA threatened to recommence hostilities against the Portuguese if they recognized or negotiated with the

⁶⁶⁸ Per Wastberg, "The Debate on the Aid to Angola," *Dagens Nyheter*, March 11, 1975, available in an English version from *Facts and Reports* 5, no. 7, April 5, 1975, 3. Although partial toward the MPLA, Dr. Wastberg is a most credible source. In addition to his work at *Dagens Nyheter*, Sweden's major daily newspaper, for which he had also served as editor-in-chief, he is currently president of the Nobel Committee for Literature, vice president of the International Writers Association (PEN), and president of the Swedish PEN. He is a long-time human rights activist and was banned from Rhodesia and South Africa during the years of minority white rule. He and several members of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) were in Angola in late 1974 and early 1975 under the auspices of the Swedish government, which was then considering humanitarian aid to the MPLA.

Lucio Lara delegation in Luanda.⁶⁶⁹ These threats did not have the intended effect, as the Portuguese recognized only the Neto wing of the MPLA. Still, they contributed to the rising tensions in Luanda, to more bad blood between the MPLA and FNLA, and to Lisbon's (and the OAU's) difficulties in bringing the three factions together so that Angola's path to independence could be peacefully negotiated.

This violence, of course, was not only a manifestation of thirteen years of guerrilla and fratricidal warfare, but also Lisbon's bleak history of colonization and oppression of the black majority. Now, with ceasefires signed and independence promised, the struggle shifted gears from insurgency and guerrilla operations to street demonstrations, strikes, ghetto warfare and increasing black on black violence. The Portuguese authorities seemed unwilling or incapable of subduing the bloodletting. They imposed a twelve-hour curfew and increased the army's security patrols, but did not enter the musseques. Within this chaotic situation, the FNLA, supported by Zaire, China, and increasingly, the United States, emerged as the most powerful, at least militarily, of the three liberation movements and seemingly in a position to have the major voice in Angola's future.

⁶⁶⁹ Johnson, "New Angola Clashes Hinted at by Aides of 2 Guerrilla Units," *New York Times*, November 10, 1974, 35 and "Toll is Put at 100 in Angola Capital." Johnson also reported that MPLA sources told him that Neto feared both Roberto and Chipenda because of their close ties to, and backing from, Mobutu. He also believed that the FNLA, militarily enhanced by the addition of Chipenda's 2,000-3,000 fighting force, would have too much power in a united liberation front. Because of this, the MPLA was extremely hesitant to reach an agreement with the FNLA, which only occurred in early January 1975 in Mombasa, Kenya, under the auspices of President Kenyatta and the OAU.

Given its superior military situation, the FNLA, probably with the encouragement of the Mobutu regime, apparently attempted to radically change the situation in Luanda even more in its favor. As recounted by Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, in mid-November, the FNLA tried to seize power in Luanda. FNLA “Troops were moved into the capital and transport aircraft attempted to land there. Many were killed in the fighting.” His allegation is based on information he received from an eyewitness to this event in Luanda, who told him the fighting at the time was the result of an FNLA attempt to seize power.⁶⁷⁰

Per Wastberg, in Luanda at the time, supports Klinghoffer’s assertion. Dr. Wastberg reported that the FNLA’s objective was a coup d’etat, presumably against the Portuguese authorities, with the movement’s military contingent in Luanda augmented by reinforcements flown in from Kinshasa. Zaire would further support the coup by direct military intervention, which the FNLA would request once it initiated its action. The Portuguese government in Luanda did not roll over, however. Supported by the MPLA, the Portuguese army foiled the FNLA’s power play by closing the airport before the

⁶⁷⁰ Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War: A Study in Soviet Policy in the Third World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), 15 and note 19, page 160.

Kinshasa transports arrived. Outmaneuvered, the National Front aborted the planned coup.⁶⁷¹

What all this suggests is that Holden Roberto was not interested in forming a united front with the other liberation movements.⁶⁷² By the fall of 1974, his power position relative to the other liberation movements had been substantially enhanced. While the CIA may not have been directly involved in the FNLA's coup attempt, its increased support to the FNLA in July, along with the weapons and training the Chinese and Zairians provided, no doubt were major factors in Roberto's calculations on how best to place himself and his FNLA in the driver's seat in Angola. Given his advantageous

⁶⁷¹ Wastberg, "The Debate on Aid to Angola." In his article, Dr. Wastberg also reported that the FNLA radio station in Kinshasa was apparently not notified of the decision to abort the coup attempt. It proclaimed over the airwaves that the National Front had seized power in Luanda from the "robbers, rascals, adventurers, and communists, who have been misusing it so far." Ibid. Interestingly, both Klinghoffer and Soviet journalist Viktor Sidenko have noted that General Walters, the CIA's Deputy Director, was in Luanda during this same time frame. Viktor Sidenko, "The Nakuru Agreement," *New Times* (Moscow), no. 26 (June 1975): 16 and "The Intrigues of Angola's Enemies," *New Times*, no. 30 (July 1975): 14. Both speculate that the general's presence in Luanda – assuming he was in fact in the Angolan capital at the time – suggests the CIA was involved with the FNLA's attempt to seize power. Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, 82. I think it is doubtful that General Walters was in Luanda in November 1974 or any other time before or during the civil war, despite abundant rumors to the contrary.

⁶⁷² In late November 1975, the CIA assessed the grim prospects for Angola, noting that the military fortunes of the MPLA were on the upswing and "The future of the FNLA and UNITA depends on their ability to force the MPLA, either militarily or politically, into accepting them into a government of national unity." Then, implying that the FNLA was not then, nor ever had been, interested in participating in such a government, the Agency reported, "While this seems to be UNITA's preferred option, it is less certain that the FNLA would even now be preparing to accept a power-sharing arrangement with the MPLA." Central Intelligence Agency, Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, "Angola: Short-Term Military and Political Prospects," November 26, 1975, p. 2; available from CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

military position in the fall of 1974, then, he was probably inclined to militarily force the issue as to who would dominate Angola's future.

That he did not succeed was due in no small part to several external and internal factors. First, the Portuguese were not yet willing to wash their hands of the Angolan situation and still retained a modicum of control over events in the colony. Secondly, Admiral Rosa Coutinho, Lisbon's high commissioner in Luanda who favored the MPLA, was not inclined to let the FNLA, which he saw as a creature of Zaire, dictate Angola's future. Thirdly, the leadership of the FNLA was largely incompetent - both politically and militarily - starting with Holden Roberto, who remained in Kinshasa until mid-1975. Its military forces, which enjoyed a clear numerical superiority over the other two liberation movements, were disorganized and undisciplined, despite Chinese and Zairian training.

The failed power grab in November probably convinced the FNLA's supporters, at least Mobutu of Zaire, that a change in strategy was required, including an FNLA-UNITA alliance. The two would then represent a majority in any sort of future coalition government that might take shape.⁶⁷³ Thus, temporarily setting aside their differences, on November 25 in Kinshasa, the two factions reached an agreement to cooperate in future

⁶⁷³ Per Wastberg, addressing the effects of the failed coup attempt on the FNLA's future plans, had this comment on the FNLA-UNITA bilateral agreement of late November. "The FNLA...made an agreement to co-operate with UNITA after pressure from Mobutu, who intended the MPLA to be pushed aside at future negotiations." Wastberg, "The Debate on the Aid to Angola."

independence negotiations with Portugal. The agreement set the stage for the marriage of convenience among all three movements, brokered by President Kenyatta in early January 1975, which led to the short-lived Alvor agreement.

Soviet Weapons for the MPLA, Fall 1974

Despite the chain of events discussed above, in which the CIA was an important early link, the Ford Administration denied any American involvement in Angolan affairs in 1974. In contrast, they insisted that during the crucial July to November days of confusion, disorder and mounting tensions in the Angolan situation, Moscow decided to resume its support to the MPLA. This assistance, according to Edward Mulcahy, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, was “extensive.”⁶⁷⁴ On this issue, however, there is substantial reason to believe that the administration was inflating or out-right inventing the amount of support the Soviet Union provided. Indeed,

⁶⁷⁴ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 183. The Soviet Union was a long-term supporter of most of southern Africa’s national liberation movements. Its support for the MPLA dated back to the movement’s establishment in 1956. According to John Marcum, at the time of the Portuguese coup in 1974, the total amount of Soviet assistance to the Popular Movements totaled \$63 million for the 18-year time frame. A large portion of this - \$54 million – came after the commencement of the active insurgency against the Portuguese in early 1961. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II, 229 and note 371, p. 476. As previously noted, the Soviets had ceased all aid to the MPLA during 1973 and most of 1974, because of the movement’s internal divisions. According to historian Odd Arne Westad, although the Soviets spent much time and effort trying to restore unity to the MPLA during this period, even promising substantial aid if it mended its fences, they were unsuccessful. In 1973, they decided to give Chipenda some assistance and invited him “for ‘confidential’ conversations at their Lusaka embassy up to 1974.” Odd Arne Westad, “Moscow and the Angolan Crisis, 1974-1976: A New Pattern of Intervention,” p. 5 [Database on-line]; available from Cold War International History Project /Bulletin. However, in October 1974, following Neto’s reassertion of his leadership in late September, Moscow decided to give its full backing to the “reconstructed” MPLA. Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 234. Westad’s analysis is based on his study of Soviet documents.

American estimates were so ambiguous and vague on Soviet military support to the MPLA, at least until late in the Angolan Civil War, that it is difficult to ascertain just how much equipment Moscow actually provided – and when.⁶⁷⁵ However, it is not so difficult to demonstrate that administration spokesmen, who sometimes got their stories confused, were largely speculating or being intentionally deceptive when they talked about the subject, as the following discussion illustrates.

Kissinger, testifying on January 29 before Senator Clark's subcommittee, stated that Soviet support for the MPLA resumed in the fall of 1974. Eight days later, Edward Mulcahy seemed to confirm this testimony when he told the subcommittee that the Soviet Union began extensive rearming of the MPLA in October 1974, via the Congo (Brazzaville). The State Department, however, subsequently amended the fall 1974 delivery date, in response to intense questioning by Senator Clark. He had asked

⁶⁷⁵ Piero Gleijeses' analysis of Soviet and other nation's assistance to the MPLA is excellent and exposes gaping holes in the administration's argument on the issue. From his interviews with MPLA members and his review of East European archival material, especially that of Yugoslavia, not a Soviet-bloc member, and East Germany, he has been able to show that during the latter half of 1974 and continuing to October 1975, the extent of Soviet aid, as well as that of other MPLA backers, is still largely unknown and thus remains a highly controversial subject. Gleijeses does argue, however, that Yugoslavia, and not the Soviet Union, was the most consistent supporter of the MPLA throughout. His assertion is supported by MPLA testimonies to that effect. Antonio dos Santos Franca Ndal, a senior MPLA guerrilla commander, told Gleijeses that Yugoslavia "had stood by the MPLA, 'even and especially, in our most difficult moments.'" Paulo Jorge, a senior MPLA official and one of Neto's top political assistants, noted, "In 1974, 'when the Soviet Union stopped its aid and the other Soviet bloc countries followed suit, Yugoslavia alone in the socialist camp continued to help us.'" Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 347. Lucio Lara, reflecting on the absence of Soviet aid during the summer of 1974, when the CIA had weighed into the Angolan issue and with Zaire and China backing the FNLA, noted, "We had the feeling they had abandoned us...Right when we needed a lot of weapons, we couldn't get them." Ibid., 244. Chapter 17, "Repercussions," is especially illuminating on the issue of external aid.

Mulcahy how the United States knew of these arms shipment and just how “extensive” they were, which related to Mulcahy’s previous statement that the United States’ actions were in response to Soviet actions. At this point, Mulcahy’s immediate superior at the department, William Schaufele, joined the discussion, admitting, “We do not have the exact statistics...I think what we saw, Mr. Chairman, was enough arms going in to, in effect, double the size of the MPLA armed forces.”⁶⁷⁶

Senator Clark continued pressing the issue. The State Department representatives then provided him with information that seemed designed to more strongly demonstrate that the Soviet Union had taken advantage of Lisbon’s July announcement (amended in August) of its independence plan for Angola to renew its support to the MPLA. The written statement submitted by the Department claimed that in August 1974, the Soviet Union delivered the first consignment of a \$6 million package to the OAU’s Liberation Committee in Dar-es-Salaam.⁶⁷⁷ It noted, “There is no evidence that a significant amount of military equipment later reached the Rhodesian or Southern African liberation movements, the only liberation movements other than the MPLA for which the equipment could have been intended.” This implied, of course, that the Popular

⁶⁷⁶ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 183-184.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid. State’s information is probably derived from an August 1, 1974 Tanzanian press announcement on the arrival of a Soviet plane carrying a \$6 million shipment of military supplies for “African liberation movements.” The news release was later referenced in Central Intelligence Agency, “Soviet and Cuban Intervention in the Angolan Civil War,” March 1, 1977, p. 9 [Database on-line]; available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov>.

Movement must have received the lion's share. The written statement concluded by alleging that by October or November, the MPLA was also receiving Soviet military supplies via both Cabinda and the Congo.⁶⁷⁸

Both the Schaufele and Mulcahy testimonies, as well as the State Department's written submission, on the issue of Soviet resumption of aid to the MPLA are misleading. First, their assumption that most of the weapons delivered to Dar-es-Salaam in August was destined for the MPLA, and that the latter received the material in some timely fashion, is problematical. As John Stockwell has noted, the CIA had no idea as to the final destination(s) of this material. "The Soviets began flying arms to Dar-es-Salaam designated for 'African liberation movements'; The CIA could only speculate whether they were for Rhodesian and South African movements or the MPLA on the other side of the continent."⁶⁷⁹ Historically, the Liberation Committee had distributed material it received from various sources to all of southern Africa's liberation movements, including

⁶⁷⁸ Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 183-184. Kissinger did not mention the "alleged" Soviet weapons delivery to the OAU in August 1974, perhaps because his subordinates did not tell him about it, or he forgot about this part of the argument, or he thought the evidence supporting further transfer of the equipment only to the MPLA was weak. Whatever the case, his assertion that Soviet aid to the MPLA resumed "in the fall of 1974," was enough to support the administration's argument that the Soviet Union was responsible for initiating the chain of events that led to Angola's Civil War because, according to him, the United States was not then involved in any way.

⁶⁷⁹ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 67.

Angola's MPLA, UNITA, and FNLA. As Raymond Garthoff argues, if some of the Soviet arms deliveries in August reached the MPLA, "they were from the OAU."⁶⁸⁰

Moreover, it is highly doubtful if the MPLA received any of the August shipment, or any other military supplies from the Liberation Committee, during 1974. In late December, Agostinho Neto met with a Cuban delegation in Dar-es-Salaam. In January 1975, the same Cubans spent two weeks inside Angola, observing and collecting information on the MPLA's situation, which at the time was very weak in comparison to the FNLA – at least in military terms. The group's final report, written in late January, included a written request from Neto that asked, among other things, for \$100,000 so he could "rent a ship to transport the war material we have in Dar-es-Salaam."⁶⁸¹ This request demonstrates that as of late January 1975, the MPLA had not yet been able to obtain whatever the OAU's Liberation Committee had stockpiled for it. Also, as Gleijeses points out, this request was based on Neto's belief that his movement would receive direct Soviet aid, but that such assistance was not expected for five months. In

⁶⁸⁰ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 560, note 7. The author remarked that the State Department's assertion that the August supply of Soviet arms, which was openly shipped, went mainly to the MPLA was made on "the basis of inference," and was "slanted," a point that John Marcum also makes. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol II., 253.

⁶⁸¹ Document 4, "Letter from Neto to Cuban Leadership, Dar es Salaam," January 26, 1975 [Database online]; available from Cold War International History Project (<http://cwihip.si.edu>).

the interim, “it was therefore imperative to move their material and equipment from Dar-es-Salaam to Angola.”⁶⁸²

The Cubans were slow in responding to this request as well as the others included in their January report. In August 1975, however, they finally provided the \$100,000. They also provided a small military delegation, which mapped out the details for the arrival of the trainers and advisors of the Cuban Military Mission in Angola (MMCA), whose main contingent began arriving in early October.⁶⁸³

In sum, the State Department’s deduction that all, or at least most, of the August 1974 delivery of Soviet equipment to the OAU’s Liberation Committee was destined for the MPLA may have been correct, although even this assumption is highly debatable. However, the department’s inference as to when the MPLA actually received it (soon after its arrival in Dar-es-Salaam) is clearly wrong.

Secondly, as it pertains to the administration’s argument that the Soviet Union began shipping increased arms directly to the MPLA via the Congo (Brazzaville) and Cabinda in October or November 1974, John Stockwell’s comments and Edward Mulcahy’s

⁶⁸² Piero Gleijeses, “Havana’s Policy in Africa, 1959-76: New Evidence from Cuban Archives,” p. 7 [Database on-line]; available from Cold War International History Project (<http://cwihip.si.edu>). The author’s assertion is based on interviews with some of the members of the Cuban delegation that visited Angola in January 1975, as well as written correspondence surrounding that trip.

⁶⁸³ “Raul Diaz Arguelles to the Armed Forces Minister [Raul Castro]: Report on the Visit to Angola and on the Conversation Held with Agostinho Neto, President of the MPLA, and the Political Bureau of the MPLA, as Well as with Chiefs of the Army Staff of the FAPLA [the MPLA’s Armed Forces],” August 11, 1975; reprinted in full in Gleijeses, “Havana’s Policy in Africa,” p. 19 [Database on-line]; available from Cold War International History Project/Bulletin.

testimony of February 6, 1976, demonstrate the ambiguity of the available intelligence upon which the argument is based. Without identifying the sources, but writing in the passive voice, Stockwell remarked, “There was reporting that the Soviet Union began filtering limited amounts of arms to the MPLA late in 1974.” He adds that intelligence reporting on Angola came predominately from Zairian and FNLA sources, implying that the CIA, partial to both, accepted it without question.⁶⁸⁴

Edward Mulcahy testified that the United States did not have reliable intelligence on the delivery of Soviet arms in October or November 1974. As he told Senator Clark, “I think our figures are not wholly accurate insofar as the early part of Soviet assistance to MPLA was delivered to them in the form of equipment and training in the Republic of the Congo, where, as you may recall, we closed our diplomatic establishment in 1966, and has not yet reopened.”⁶⁸⁵

These accounts underscore the fact that the United States had poor, and apparently slanted, information on Soviet activities in support of the MPLA during the latter part of 1974. Still, this problem, which essentially amounted to a major intelligence gap, did not stop Mulcahy and other administration spokesmen from asserting that the Soviet Union recommenced its assistance to the MPLA in August 1974 via the Liberation Committee

⁶⁸⁴ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 67.

⁶⁸⁵ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 182.

and stepped up that support in October or November, this time directly to the MPLA via the Congo.

Finally, none other than Henry Kissinger himself, while sticking to the tenuous argument that the Soviet Union resumed its support to the MPLA in the latter half of 1974, admitted that this assistance was designed to achieve military parity with the FNLA. Apparently referring to this time frame, the Secretary of State, in a written response to additional questions posed by Senator Clark, noted, "It appeared to us that the early shipments of Soviet arms for the MPLA were merely part of an effort to strengthen that group so it could compete militarily with the then much stronger FNLA."⁶⁸⁶ This was probably Kissinger's way of admitting, without actually saying it, that Kinshasa and Beijing were both heavily supporting the FNLA before the resumption of Moscow's assistance to the MPLA. As a result, the MPLA was lagging behind the military power curve. This, of course, excludes the fact that the United States too, throughout the fall of 1974, continued to support Roberto to the point where, by the time of the Alvor accord in mid-January 1975, he had received \$60-\$70,000 from the \$10,000 per month of increased funding.

The above discussion of the important events of mid-to-late 1974, in which the United States was at least indirectly involved through its enhanced funding to Holden Roberto,

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid., January 29, 1976, 52.

substantially destroys the first two pillars of the official argument, as discussed in Chapter 5. The Ford Administration alleged, first, that the United States, despite entreaties from its African friends, did not involve itself in the Angolan problem until its allocation of a modest \$300,000 to the FNLA on January 22; secondly, that the Soviet Union renewed and increased its support to the MPLA in the fall of 1974, several months before the United States became involved in Angola. As we have seen, from early July 1974 onward, which encompassed part of the time when Moscow had discontinued its assistance to the MPLA, American support for Holden Roberto played an important role – psychologically if not materially - in his efforts to eliminate the MPLA as a viable movement. Moreover, if the MPLA received any military support directly from the Soviet Union via the Congo in late 1974 it was limited and designed, as even Kissinger admitted, to bring the Popular Movement up to a military par with the FNLA, which was receiving weapons and training from both Zaire and China in addition to the American financial support.

The third pillar of the administration's argument, encompassing the period from the installation of the provisional government in Angola on January 31, 1975 until the July 18th American decision to covertly intervene, alleges that the Soviet Union significantly expanded its support to the MPLA, beginning in March 1975. According to Kissinger and others, this large infusion of Soviet weapons, augmented by other Communist

nations, further militarized the MPLA. Its subsequent belligerent actions destroyed the Alvor accord and indicated the Soviet objective was to install the MPLA by force of arms.

Before discussing the validity of this final part of the argument, however, it is important to address the impact of the Forty Committee's January 1975 political subsidy to the FNLA, which administration spokesmen have consistently, but dishonestly, downplayed. My discussion will show that the spring-summer deliveries of Soviet arms were, in fact, directly related to the committee's decision, although, as I argue, this was probably an unexpected and unintended result of that action. First, however, there were two other consequences, probably one intended and one expected (if not hoped for) of the political subsidy.

The January 1975 Decision

In his memoirs, Robert Gates, echoing Henry Kissinger's sentiments, alleged that the allocation of \$300,000 to Holden Roberto "was a trivial gesture compared to the longstanding and now rapidly growing Soviet military help to the MPLA. The notion that this minuscule CIA assistance was even noticed at the time, much less that it provoked the massive Soviet and Cuban buildup that followed, as alleged by some, is

silly.”⁶⁸⁷ In contrast to the administration’s disingenuous stance on this issue, this early 1975 allocation to Holden Roberto, which represented a continuation of the enhanced support that began in July 1974, was most likely a calculated decision, primarily by Henry Kissinger, to signal that the United States, like the Zairians and Chinese, was throwing its weight squarely behind the FNLA. This was symbolically important not only to Holden Roberto’s confidence and the FNLA’s overall position in the struggle for power in Angola, but also to the MPLA and the Soviet Union. It was also materially significant to the FNLA’s efforts to further undermine the MPLA’s strength – especially in its Luanda political stronghold - as we shall see.

Based on the available evidence, it appears that one intended effect of the \$300,000 was to deter further Soviet involvement,⁶⁸⁸ thereby leaving Holden Roberto and his

⁶⁸⁷ Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider’s Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster), 66. Gates was a member of the National Security Council during the Angolan crisis, Kissinger having brought him to the White House from the CIA.

⁶⁸⁸ Kissinger believed that it was critical to the stability of the super power relationship that the United States challenge the Soviet Union when, and if, important American interests were involved. As discussed in Chapter 6, in the Angolan conflict, American credibility, especially with Western Europe and the PRC, came to be defined as a significant national security interest. Kissinger and Ford believed that the disastrous ending to the war in Southeast Asia had undermined the global image of American competence and power. Both thought American credibility could be revitalized through a demonstration of strength in Angola. Moreover, both thought that it was important to send a signal to the Soviets that the United States was weighing in on the Angolan issue. Vigorous action was therefore needed, as it would not only revalidate American credibility, but also discourage further Soviet involvement in Angola. This was probably the intent of the \$300,000 subsidy, but it didn’t work. More demonstrable action was then required. This came in the form of President Ford’s 18 July authorization of IAFEATURE. Immediately after the decision, the president and Kissinger discussed the ramifications for détente of the American action. Kissinger told the president that detente “enabled us to be tough on issues involving important national interests because it gave the Soviet Union an incentive ‘to keep its head down’ when challenged.”

FNLA in the strongest position, by far, for determining Angola's future. For this to happen, however, the increased financial assistance had to be visible, despite the misleading assertion by Robert Gates that it went unnoticed or had no effect. The following discussion illustrates my point.

As monthly payments to Roberto built up during the latter half of 1974, the CIA finally took the issue of its covert support to the Forty Committee. The convocation of the entire committee, a rarity in the Kissinger years as the national security advisor, afforded an early and important opportunity for the White House, DOD, State, the Justice Department, and the national intelligence community (represented by William Colby in his role as Director of Central Intelligence) to assess the situation. This did not happen. The CIA provided the Kissinger-dominated Forty Committee with an uninformed and biased intelligence briefing on the reasons for its recommendation of a \$300,000 political subsidy to Holden Roberto and an additional \$100,000 for Jonas Savimbi. As one official who attended the meeting told Roger Morris, Kissinger's former African Affairs assistant at the National Security Council, "The intelligence was vague and nobody knew much about these people then, but it was clear that Neto, leader of the Popular

Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 309. Raymond Garthoff also argues that the intent of the January financial assistance was to dissuade further Soviet support and escalation. "All indications are that this growing American involvement was intended, especially by Kissinger, its chief proponent, to head off a Soviet involvement. That is what not only Kissinger, but opponents of the move such as Assistant Secretary Nathaniel Davis, and others directly involved including CIA Director William Colby, have said." Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, note 11, page 560.

Movement, wasn't our man." On the other hand, Roberto would ensure "the most stable and reliable government in place."⁶⁸⁹ Apparently, this was all the committee members needed. "The decision was routine...The agency laid out its reasons for backing their man and it was approved."⁶⁹⁰ The committee did not, however, approve the additional request for assistance to Savimbi.

Compared to the later assistance provided by the United States and others, one might term the initial \$300,000 as modest. However, in a Third World economy such as Angola's, the sum was actually a substantial increase to the investment in the FNLA, especially compared to the Agency's previous support to the movement. Moreover, a considerable number of small arms and ammunition could be purchased with that amount of money, although such action was technically a violation of the Forty Committee's intent. Most importantly, the FNLA flashed the money around in a way that ensured it would be noticed, as was intended. One Foreign Service Officer told Morris, "The effect of the American largess was swift and highly visible. 'Suddenly Roberto had all this money, and he began throwing it around for guns, uniforms and everything he wanted. You can't hide that sort of thing in a poor country.'" Several officials further remarked,

⁶⁸⁹ Roger Morris, "The Proxy War in Angola: Pathology of a Blunder," *The New Republic* 175 (January 31, 1976): 20-21. Morris was a major contributor to NSSM 39, but later became a leading critic of the Option Two policy.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

“That the U.S. subsidy was immediately registered by Soviet intelligence was never doubted in Washington.”⁶⁹¹

Other unidentified officials contributed additional insider information to Seymour Hersh, who reported on the increasingly confident Holden Roberto’s actions in early 1975 as a result of the January assistance. Quoting a “well-informed” source, the journalist wrote, “That money gave him a lot of extra muscle...all of a sudden he’s got a lot of bread – he’s beginning to do things.” According to Hersh, the official’s point was that Roberto’s actions would be quickly noticed by the MPLA and the Soviets.⁶⁹²

Gerald Bender, who spoke to several State Department officials knowledgeable of the Angolan program, supports this assessment. As quoted by Bender, one official reported, “There is no question that the aid was noticed by the Soviets. The American consulate [in Luanda], which had not been informed of the decision to covertly assist the FNLA, reported to Washington in early 1975 a noticeable increase in FNLA spending.” They “purchased the leading newspaper and a television station which prompted an inquiry to discover the source of the funds used to bankroll these purchases.”⁶⁹³

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁹² Seymour Hersh, “Early Angola Aid by U.S. Reported,” *New York Times*, December 19, 1975, 1.

⁶⁹³ Bender, “Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of a Failure,” note 16, p. 131. Portuguese historian Fernando Guimaraes, assessing the impact of the \$300,000, noted that it resulted in “an ostentatious bout of spending in the Angolan capital.” Moreover, “This increased level of public exposure, amid rumours already circulating that the FNLA was being supported covertly by the US, added to the tensions increasingly felt in the city between the movements.” He adds that these factors, as well as the augmentation of the FNLA by the Chipenda splinter group and “combined with displays of militarism by FNLA members, raised fears,

Whether Roberto used some of the allocated “political” money to buy guns, as one of Morris’ sources alleged, is not important. What is significant is that the FNLA used at least some of the “covert” windfall in highly overt ways by, among other things, its purchase of communications outlets. These included a TV station (named FNLA-TV) and Luanda’s major daily newspaper, *A Provincia de Angola*.⁶⁹⁴

These actions were in line with the intended effect of the financial assistance, that is, to demonstrate an increased American interest in the FNLA as a means to dissuade the Soviet Union from coming to the further assistance of the MPLA. As historian Odd Arne Westad notes, “The Soviet Union was also aware of the increase in the CIA’s covert support for the FNLA...The Soviet embassy and the KGB station in Brazzaville concluded that the American assistance would lead Holden Roberto to make an all-out bid for power very soon.”⁶⁹⁵ The Soviets were apparently correct in their evaluation.

particularly among the MPLA, that Roberto had no intention of keeping to the transitional programme established at Alvor.” Guimaraes, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 101. His account of the MPLA’s reaction to the FNLA’s spending spree is based on an August 1991 interview with Joao Van Dunem, the former Political Commissar of the MPLA’s military wing (FAPLA). John Stockwell’s assistant on Angola, Brenda MacElhinney, perhaps had the most succinct remarks on the actions of the FNLA at the time. She told Stockwell, “The FNLA soldiers had been slathering animals when they came into Luanda that spring, 1975.” Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 64.

⁶⁹⁴ *Africa Contemporary Record, 1975-1976*, “Angola,” B-424.

⁶⁹⁵ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 225. Westad’s evidence comes from Soviet documents in the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI).

In early February 1975, as Stockwell relates, Roberto, “encouraged by Mobutu and the United States...began attacking the MPLA in Luanda and northern Angola.”⁶⁹⁶ By early 1975, of course, the FNLA was well positioned militarily to carry out these attacks, having begun movement of its combatants into Angola, including Luanda, in late 1974, as previously discussed.⁶⁹⁷ These early 1975 actions strongly suggest, as Moscow probably suspected, that Roberto intended to militarily determine Angola’s future by destroying, or at least further weakening, the MPLA.

The FNLA’s accelerating aggression, apparently in an attempt to dislodge the MPLA from Luanda and its environs, resulted in the first major violation of the Alvor agreement in March 1975, the details of which I will discuss later. These militant actions were probably an expected effect of the January assistance to the National Front, given Kissinger’s generally pessimistic outlook on the prospects for peaceful political processes anywhere in southern Africa. In 1975 that perspective was focused on Angola and the Alvor agreement. Based on his own words about Angola’s tenuous situation, one can reasonably conclude that he was extremely doubtful about a peaceful solution to its difficulties. He revealed this skepticism about African politics, including a belief that

⁶⁹⁶ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 67.

⁶⁹⁷ *The Africa Contemporary Record’s* account of the militancy of the FNLA in early 1975 notes, in part, that the National Front began sending “well-armed” contingents of the ELNA (the movement’s military force) into Luanda and other important centers. *Africa Contemporary Record, 1975-1976*, “Angola,” B-423.

military force was usually the determining factor in any outcome, throughout the Angolan crisis.

In early January 1975, for example, Edward Mulcahy briefed him on the upcoming talks in Portugal, which followed the President Kenyatta brokered agreement in Mombasa. The acting chief of the State Department's African Bureau noted that the three liberation movements had just concluded a successful meeting (in Kenya) as a "preliminary" to the upcoming talks in Portugal. While the United States had no inside information on the agreed-upon arrangements, information leaking out of the meeting indicated the three movements would participate equally in a transitional government. Kissinger's response was, "Yes, but it isn't going to wind up that way," implying he believed, even this early, that Angola's future would not be determined through the peaceful efforts of a manufactured coalition.⁶⁹⁸

On the same theme, in late March, Kissinger referred to the FNLA as "these cut-throats," and told the African Bureau that he hoped it wasn't "running around like mother hens" advising the movement on what to do.⁶⁹⁹ Later, in June, he would tell President Ford that the bureaucrats in State's African Bureau "want to 'let the democratic

⁶⁹⁸ "The Secretary's 8:00 a.m. Staff Meeting – January 6, 1975," p. 4 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts

⁶⁹⁹ "The Secretary's Principals' and Regional's' Staff Meeting," March 31, 1975, p. 43 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

process' work. That is total nonsense. There is none."⁷⁰⁰ In August, he chastised his "choirboys" in African Affairs first for not understanding that "these African leaders are not entirely motivated by moral principles," and secondly for their "eloquent appeals about not using force."⁷⁰¹ In September, he reiterated his doubts about the feasibility of a political solution in Angola when Nathaniel Davis briefed him on an upcoming Kaunda-arranged meeting in Angola among representatives of the three liberation movements and Angola's neighboring states. "That is fine, but that's not going to lead to anything, is it?" Nathaniel Davis, replied, "It certainly --." Kissinger interrupted him by stating, "It never has."⁷⁰²

Based on the foregoing, I surmise that in approving the \$300,000 in January, Kissinger probably expected that Roberto would seize the initiative in Angola, but not so much in the political arena, which in any case was a difficult task given the MPLA's support base in Luanda and most other major urban centers, as I discussed earlier. Rather, I am arguing that Kissinger thought that the American show of support, supplementing Zairian and Chinese military assistance, would encourage Holden Roberto to quickly, and violently, force the issue as to which movement would ultimately govern Angola.

⁷⁰⁰ "Memorandum of Conversation, June 6, 1975, The Oval Office," p. 6, National Security Advisor – Memoranda of Conversation, 1973-1977, June 6, 1975 – Ford, Kissinger, Box 12, Gerald R. Ford Library.

⁷⁰¹ "The Secretary's Principals' and Regional's' Staff Meeting," August 7, 1975, pp. 28-29 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

⁷⁰² "The Secretary's Staff Meeting," September 11, 1975, pp. 29-30 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

Roberto, already in a militarily advantageous position and inclined to let guns speak for him, seemingly tried to do just that.

While Kissinger and others, such as Schaufele and Mulcahy, have placed the blame for the demise of the Alvor accord and the onset of the civil war on the MPLA, emboldened by Soviet arms and support, the causal relationship between the January allocation to Holden Roberto and the FNLA's follow-on activities suggests otherwise. It is true that the MPLA attacked the Luanda offices of Daniel Chipenda in February 1975, a month before major hostilities broke out between the MPLA and the FNLA.⁷⁰³ However, Chipenda's splinter group was not a recognized party to the January agreement. Its presence in Luanda was illegal, a major irritant and threat to Neto's MPLA, and one source of mounting tensions between the MPLA and FNLA, toward which Chipenda was quickly moving. I am not condoning the Popular Movement's actions against Chipenda's supporters. Rather, I am suggesting that given the bad blood between Neto and Chipenda, who tried to usurp the former's leadership of the MPLA, as well as Chipenda's non-recognition by the Alvor agreement, the MPLA's actions are understandable, even if they are not excusable.

⁷⁰³ See Chapter 5 for my discussion of the Ford Administration's assertion that the Soviet-supported MPLA was responsible for destroying the Alvor accord. See also note 430 where I discuss the MPLA's February attack on Chipenda's office in Luanda and why the MPLA thought this action was necessary.

Between the FNLA and MPLA, however, there were only minor clashes in February. March was an entirely different story. Contrary to the administration's official account, it was the FNLA, and not the MPLA, which precipitated the violence that erupted toward the latter part of the month. The first major violation of the Alvor agreement occurred on March 23 when FNLA units attacked an MPLA complex in Luanda's Casenga musseque and its headquarters in the capital's Vila Alice suburb.⁷⁰⁴ Widespread fighting between the two continued throughout the evening across Luanda after these initial assaults.

Three days later, on March 26, the FNLA captured and killed fifty-one young MPLA recruits in Caxito, about thirty miles northeast of the capital. This incident, since termed the "Caxito Massacre," spurred the sometimes complacent Portuguese colonial authorities to action. On March 27, the High Commissioner, Brigadier General Silva Cardoso, ordered all MPLA and FNLA troops to their barracks. The FNLA defied the order and violence again broke out in Luanda, continuing until a hastily arranged visit by Melo Antunes, Lisbon's foreign minister, resulted in a ceasefire on March 28.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰⁴ In an apparent after-action report on Angola, the CIA, while confessing to little else, finally admitted that the FNLA's attacks against the MPLA in March represented the first major violation of the Alvor accord. Noting that Roberto "was probably spoiling for a fight," the Agency reported that he might have been seeking a quick military victory over the rival MPLA before Soviet arms could strengthen its military capabilities. Central Intelligence Agency, "Soviet and Cuban Intervention in the Angolan Civil War," March 1, 1977 (estimated publication date), p. 12 [Database on-line]; available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov>. This assessment is interesting in light of my argument that Kissinger expected Holden Roberto to do just what the Agency, after the fact, said he might have been doing in early 1975.

⁷⁰⁵ On these March 1975 incidents, see Colin Legum and Tony Hodges, *After Angola: The War over Southern Africa*, Part 3, "How the MPLA Won in Angola," (New York: Africana Publishing Company,

Despite this ceasefire and a second one on April 8, fighting between the two factions, with UNITA maintaining a neutral stance, continued. On April 9, widespread shooting broke out at the airport just before the MPLA's Neto arrived from a brief trip to Lisbon. Later in April and continuing into May, another major wave of fighting broke out when the FNLA attacked MPLA offices throughout Luanda's musseques and the headquarters of the pro-MPLA National Union of Angolan Workers (UNTA). As the MPLA retaliated, at least 500 people were killed and another 700 wounded.⁷⁰⁶

A third ceasefire, on May 12, proved as powerless in stopping the violence as its predecessors. In late May, the MPLA launched a series of attacks against the FNLA in northern Angola and in the Malanje district to the east of Luanda. The MPLA claimed that it was retaliating after months of FNLA aggression, which from the above

1976), 50-51; Daniel Spikes, *Angola and the Politics of Intervention: From Local Bush War to Chronic Crisis in Southern Africa* (Jefferson (NC): McFarland & Company, 1993), 143-144; *Africa Contemporary Record, 1975-1976*, "Angola," B-424; "Rebels Slain in Angola, Lisbon Says," *Washington Post*, March 27, 1975, sec. A, p. 30; "Angola: FNLA-MPLA Violence Threatens Accord," April 5, 1975 [Database on-line]; available from *World News Digest: Facts on File*; Jane Bergerol, "Angolan Liberation Fronts Agree to end Violence," *Facts and Reports*, 5, no. 7 (April 5, 1975). Almost immediately following the March 28 ceasefire, and throwing gasoline on the incendiary situation, Holden Roberto sent a 500-man motorized column into Luanda, continuing the FNLA's military buildup in the city. Legum and Hodges, "How the MPLA Won in Angola," 50. Nathaniel Davis apparently thought this latter event was significant enough to mention it to Kissinger in the State Department's weekly meeting. Davis reported that Africa was "quiet," except Roberto had brought 500 more to Rwanda [sic], according to Portuguese reports. "The Secretary's Principals and Regional Staff Meeting," March 31, 1975, pp. 42-43 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

⁷⁰⁶ Legum and Hodges, "How the MPLA Won in Angola," 50. Also, Nicolas Ashford, "Three Liberation Factions Put a Country's Peace at Risk," *The Times* (London), May 9, 1975, 7; "Angola: 500 Dead in Worst Fighting to Date," May 10, 1975 [Database on-line]; available from *World New Digest: Facts on File*.

discussion, appears to have been the case. In early June, the two factions clashed in Cabinda, with the MPLA driving the National Front out of the capital city and shortly thereafter securing the enclave.⁷⁰⁷ The Popular Movement also attacked UNITA in early June, an action that probably hastened the tentative coalition between the FNLA and UNITA, which occurred in early July after the MPLA forcibly expelled both from Luanda.

The available evidence, then, discredits the administration's argument that the \$300,000 in funding had no effect on subsequent events. In fact, in early 1975, it had exactly the effect that at least Kissinger both intended and probably expected it would. Besides the highly visible political offensive, Holden Roberto and his FNLA, emboldened by its external patrons – the Zairians, the Chinese and increasingly, the United States - escalated its military actions against the MPLA. The American political subsidy and the FNLA's ensuing actions, the latter encouraged by both the United States and Zaire, as John Stockwell has noted, were intentionally designed to discourage action by the Soviet Union, thereby providing the FNLA with the opportunity, if it so chose, to achieve a quick victory over the MPLA.

Moreover, there is no evidence that the United States, using its influence with Mobutu or its enhanced ties to the FNLA, tried to persuade the National Front to abide by the

⁷⁰⁷ Legum and Hodges, *After Angola*, Part 3, "How the MPLA Won in Angola," 51.

Alvor accords, as the MPLA and UNITA appeared to be doing in early 1975.⁷⁰⁸ Further, Washington never threw its diplomatic weight behind either Lisbon's or the OAU's efforts to sustain the Alvor provisions. And neither Kissinger nor anyone else in the Ford Administration approached the Soviet Union about the Angolan situation until the fall of 1975, when the chances for a peaceful resolution to the civil war had largely vanished. Thus, as John Marcum observed, with the \$300,000, "the American government expanded an 'existing' client relationship that it was confident its 'adversaries knew about,'" and left the Soviet Union "to draw its own conclusions."⁷⁰⁹

In contrast to the January American assistance to the FNLA, the Soviet Union supported the Alvor agreement and its provision for a coalition government through the early months of 1975. However, according to Westad, the FNLA's display of political and especially military muscle following January's financial allocation led Moscow to believe, correctly as it turns out, that Holden Roberto would abrogate the agreement and make a bid to seize power. Thus, Soviet decision makers concluded that "Only through a further strengthening of Neto's MPLA could more long-term peace stand a chance."⁷¹⁰ The unintended, and counter-productive, effect of the American assistance in January,

⁷⁰⁸ Regarding adherence to the Alvor agreement, John Stockwell argues that both the MPLA and UNITA "acted in good faith," Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 67.

⁷⁰⁹ Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II, 257.

⁷¹⁰ Westad, *The Global War*, 225.

then, was that it did not deter the Soviet Union from eventually coming to the assistance of its long-time client.

Soviet Weapons for the MPLA: The December 1974 Decision

The third pillar of the Ford Administration's argument in defense of the United States' own involvement alleges that while Moscow's renewed support for the MPLA subsided in January 1975, a new and larger infusion of Soviet arms commenced in March 1975, augmented by weapons deliveries from other Communist nations. Moreover, as argued, Moscow's decision to begin this enhanced weapons supply operation must have been made much earlier, in December 1974 or January 1975. This phase of the Soviet intervention, as alleged, resulted in an increasingly militant MPLA that, according to Henry Kissinger, "had little incentive to fulfill the terms of the Alvor accord which would have prevented it from dominating any future coalition government."⁷¹¹ The conjectured Soviet objective, then, was to install the MPLA, by force of arms, as the preeminent force in Angola's future government.⁷¹²

This part of the administration's argument, like the rest, is deeply flawed. First, as previously discussed, it was the FNLA that began the series of attacks on the MPLA that

⁷¹¹ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 9.

⁷¹² Based on my previous discussion of the impact of the January allocation to Holden Roberto, it appears that Kissinger was accusing the Soviet Union of helping the MPLA to do exactly what he hoped the FNLA would do, that is, establish itself, by force of arms if necessary, as the principal, if not only, decider of Angola's future.

ultimately led to all-out civil war in the summer of 1975. Consequently, the administration's attempts to paint the MPLA as the principal aggressor were not substantiated by the facts, which at the time, largely came from readily available press reports.⁷¹³ Secondly, the "official story" regarding the Soviet arms deliveries in the spring and early summer of 1975, especially the gap between Moscow's decision to increase its support to the MPLA and the actual deliveries of weapons and equipment (the gestation period, in the logistics vernacular), and the extent of the Soviet-provided military support are particularly problematical. In the case of the Soviet decision date, the administration's argument was mostly based on conjecture and speculation and was probably deliberately misleading. Further, the issue of the amount of Soviet arms delivered appears to have been intentionally exaggerated.

In retrospect, while Kissinger and others were essentially correct about the timeframe for the Soviet decision (December 1974), it is important to remember that it came on the heels of the FNLA's military buildup and aggression in northern Angola and Luanda in the fall of 1974, as well as amid increasing rumors that the United States, in addition to

⁷¹³ John Marcum's thorough rebuttal to this part of the "official story," a case of speaking truth to power, had little, if any impact on the administration's argument that the MPLA initiated the sequence of events that destroyed the Alvor agreement. See Marcum's testimony in Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 4, 1976, 126-130, especially 129. Despite Marcum's revealing testimony, Kissinger continued his distortion of the truth on this issue both in later statements and in his memoirs.

Zaire and China, was supporting the FNLA.⁷¹⁴ Moreover, the Soviets appeared to have consciously delayed implementing what Westad has described as December's "elaborate plan for supplying the MPLA with heavy weapons and large amounts of ammunition."⁷¹⁵ When they finally did carry out "the elaborate plan," the available evidence suggests it was scaled down considerably.

State Department spokesmen insinuated that the three-four month gap between Moscow's December decision and the delivery of the first consignment of weapons, by airlift in late March 1975, occurred because the Soviets required that amount of time to assemble and actually ship the weaponry.⁷¹⁶ This was either a naïve assumption (doubtful) or, more likely, a purposely-misleading assertion.

⁷¹⁴ As previously cited, Thomas A. Johnson, a journalist for the *New York Times* who was in Angola and Zaire in late 1974, reported the allegations of American support for the FNLA. See, for example, "Angola Guerrillas Still Divided Despite Efforts to Spur Unity," *New York Times*, October 2, 1974, 15, and "One Rebel Group Gains in Angola," *New York Times*, November 17, 1974, 7. These allegations were correct, of course, since the CIA had increased its financial support to Holden Roberto in July 1974.

⁷¹⁵ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 224.

⁷¹⁶ William Schauffele, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, testified for example, that violence broke out in Luanda in March after "large shipments of Soviet arms...began to arrive there for the MPLA. The U.S.S.R. must have begun to assemble and ship this equipment as early as January, the moment when the Alvor accord was put into effect." Congress, House of Representatives, *United States Policy on Angola*, January 26, 1976, 3. Later, he testified during Senator Clark's hearings that the first new deliveries of Soviet arms in March reflected "decisions taken several months earlier." Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1975, 175. At the time, these statements represented little more than a guess. It was only much later, with the release of Soviet documents following the end of the Cold War, that it could be established that the Kremlin made its decision to increase its support to the MPLA in early December 1974. On this issue, see Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 224. Based on his own research, Piero Gleijeses states the December date is "consistent with Cuban and Angolan sources." Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 347.

My contention that the administration was yet again being deceptive is based on several “knowns” at the time, the first of which was the speed of the CIA’s own weapons deliveries to the FNLA and UNITA following the approval of its covert plan on July 18. As John Stockwell tells us, the “first planeload of arms left South Carolina for Kinshasa on July 29,” which was only eleven days after President Ford’s decision on IAFEATURE. He adds that two more C-141 flights to Kinshasa followed from 3-9 August. During the same time frame, the *American Champion*, a merchant cargo ship leased by the U.S. Navy, was loaded and sailed for Matadi, Zaire’s only seaport. It docked on September 12.⁷¹⁷

It is possible that Kissinger and others assumed, ingenuously, that the Soviet Union’s logistic planners were not as capable as those of the CIA and simply needed more time to plan and activate their logistics operation. More probably, they cited the decision date, which at the time was based on nothing more than speculation, as having been several months before the actual delivery date in order to strengthen their own argument that the Kremlin’s decision came before the Forty Committee’s January 22, 1975 decision.

Secondly, the CIA would later confirm that the Soviet Union was at least as capable as the United States in quickly mounting a weapons supply effort. In an after-action report, the Agency noted, “The Soviets did have the technical capability to begin an airlift within

⁷¹⁷ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 55, 86, 188-189.

a few days after a decision to that effect had been made.”⁷¹⁸ While this report apparently came about a year after the termination of IAFEATURE, it is reasonable to argue that the CIA, as well as the State Department’s own intelligence analysts, knew all along that the Soviets could launch a supply operation as quickly as the United States. Even if they had not apprised Kissinger and other administration officials of this capability, the latter were certainly aware of the Soviet Union’s logistic competence, having witnessed a rapid and significant Soviet arms re-supply operation during the October 1973 Israeli-Arab conflict.⁷¹⁹ Although the transshipment points into Angola – Brazzaville and Pointe Noire in the Congo Republic – were farther away from Soviet territory, the methodology and processes of a long-range logistics operation remain fairly constant. Moreover, the major problem was not getting the materiel in a timely fashion to the Congo, but rather shipping it from there into Angola.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, “Soviet and Cuban Intervention in the Angolan Civil War,” March 1, 1977 (estimated publication date), p. 26 [Database on-line]; available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov>.

⁷¹⁹ Bruce D. Porter’s analysis of Soviet arms deliveries during the 1973 Mid-East war supports my own assessment of Soviet resupply capabilities. He concludes, “The decision to resupply the Arabs in the October War seems to have been made and implemented in a matter of a few days. That conflict demonstrated that, in a crunch, the USSR could deliver arms to the Middle East at speeds and volumes roughly equal to those that could be achieved in the United States. Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars, 1945-1980* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 237. Porter adds, “The conflicts in the Horn of Africa and Angola demonstrated that Moscow could also deliver arms quickly and in mass to geographic points considerably more distant than the Middle East.” Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Piero Gleijeses explained this logistic challenge thusly. “Unlike the FNLA and UNITA, the MPLA could receive weapons only by sea or air.” Because the Portuguese still controlled the ports and airways [in Angola], at least until the autumn of 1975, “weapons for the MPLA had to be sent to the Congo, and from there smuggled on small boats into minor ports. Obviously, this was feasible. Still, the logistical abilities

Soviet Restraint

Kissinger and others alleged that the Soviet Union was quick to manipulate the Angolan crisis for its own purposes. They also claimed the Portuguese Communist Party aided and abetted this endeavor. Implying Soviet eagerness, if not rashness, Kissinger noted, for example, that after the Portuguese coup in 1974, Moscow was convinced that “a revolutionary situation was developing in Angola. The Soviet Union began to exploit this situation in the fall of 1974.” Moreover, he argued that the United States remained clear of the building crisis. Washington did not support UNITA and had only “modest support for FNLA.” American restraint occurred because “Portugal was trying to organize a peaceful transition to independence, for the exercise of restraint by all outside parties...But the U.S.S.R. and Portuguese Communists decided to put the MPLA in power in Angola through stepped-up shipments of arms.”⁷²¹

If the Soviets were as eager as the administration claimed they were to exploit the unfolding situation in Angola, and if, as I have demonstrated above, they were quite capable of quickly planning and executing a long-range logistics program, why did the Kremlin delay implementing the delivery portion of the re-supply plan? Westad’s mining

of the MPLA should not be exaggerated; it would have been a daunting task...” Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 350.

⁷²¹ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, January 29, 1976, 9. Building upon this theme of an impetuous Kremlin, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, William Schaefe, characterized Soviet behavior in Angola as lacking restraint and criticized Moscow for seeking a “unilateral advantage” in Angola. *Ibid.*, February 6, 1976, 178.

of the Soviet archives provides no answers to this enigma, as he fails to address the reason for the gap - at least directly.⁷²² His silence on this issue suggests that he believes the administration's spurious argument that the Soviet Union did not have the capability to quickly carry out a complicated logistics operation, far from the Soviet Union, but he doesn't actually say this. What he does say is that Moscow believed that the coalition government established by the Alvor agreement "was to be preferred, but that such an alliance could only be based on a position of strength by the MPLA...Only through a further strengthening of Neto's MPLA could more long-term peace stand a chance, the CPSU International Department claimed."⁷²³

Still, the Soviet Union seemed to have no sense of urgency in either delivering the weapons or, interestingly, in telling the MPLA about the impending military support. It wasn't until January 30, 1975 that Ambassador Afanasenko, in Brazzaville, informed MPLA official Jose Eduardo dos Santos of the arms package and expressed the "hope" that it would arrive in time to strengthen the MPLA's military position. In the interim, the Soviets also tried, unsuccessfully, to push the MPLA into an alliance with UNITA,

⁷²² Westad does tell us that Soviet Ambassador Afanasenko was given the task of convincing the Congo's president, Marien Ngouabi, to allow Brazzaville as the transshipment point for the operation. "This was not easy. Congo had never been a close ally of the Soviet Union...and it had for some time sponsored both Neto's MPLA rivals and a Cabinda separatist group," actions which Agostinho Neto had previously criticized. "Still, on 4 December Ngouabi gave his go-ahead for the Soviet operation." Even after this hard-to-get "green light," the Soviets still delayed their execution of the resupply operation for nearly four months. Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 224-225.

⁷²³ Ibid., 225.

which “could get their Angolan allies out of the difficult spot they were in.”⁷²⁴ Between early December and late January, then, we are left speculating on just what the Soviet Union was doing in terms of its “elaborate plan” to increase its military support to the MPLA. Also, what then happened between 30 January, when the Soviets promised the MPLA increased support, and the ensuing nearly two months before the alleged arrival of Soviet arms by air in late March?

There is a reasonable explanation for Moscow’s slowness in actually delivering on its promised increased support to the MPLA, and Odd Arne Westad indirectly provides it, without actually saying so. He alludes to a certain Soviet diplomatic sensitivity about African concerns over external intervention in Angola (at least before the large-scale South African intervention in October). As previously noted, the Soviets attempted to convince the MPLA to form an alliance with Jonas Savimbi’s UNITA as a way of getting “their Angolan allies out of the difficult spot they were in.” Westad infers the Soviets pushed for this alliance as a result of pressure from Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, a prominent and influential African leader and statesman. Based on correspondence between the Soviet ambassador in Dar-es-Salaam and the International Department of the

⁷²⁴ Ibid., 225. When Agostinho Neto met with the visiting Cubans in late January 1975 to discuss what the MPLA needed to enhance its military fortunes, he had apparently been apprised of the Soviet decision to increase its support for his movement. However, he told the Cubans that Soviet military assistance was not expected for another five months. That would place the initial delivery date about June 1975. See the earlier part of this chapter for a discussion of the Cuban visit to Angola in early January 1975 and the results of their observations.

Communist Party's Central Committee, at least as early as February 5, the Tanzanian president "attempted to get the Soviets to increase the pressure on the MPLA leadership to make the necessary concession to forge such an alliance." Moreover, "Nyerere also warned the Soviets against direct involvement in the Angolan conflict. African countries would react sharply against any form of foreign intervention, Nyerere said."⁷²⁵ Nyerere's stature, as well as his pro-MPLA sympathies, probably played an important part in the Soviet decision to delay activating the logistics plan, while at the same time they tried to get the MPLA to form a partnership with UNITA and supported the provisions of Alvor.

Christopher Andrew and former KGB official, Vasili Mitrokhin, support this assessment.⁷²⁶ Many historians doubt the validity of the Mitrokhin KGB archival materials. On the issue of Soviet restraint during the early phase of the Angolan conflict, however, their assessment tracks with the analyses of reputable historians such as Westad and Gleijeses. They argue that the Kremlin decision makers remained in favor of a negotiated settlement in Angola, as Westad asserts. However, instead of immediately activating the plan drawn up in December, they contend that Moscow "threw its weight instead behind African leaders to persuade the three Angolan movements to join in

⁷²⁵ Westad, *The Global War*, 225-226

⁷²⁶ Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 450.

negotiations with the Portuguese for an orderly transfer of power. These negotiations led to the Alvor Agreement of January 1975.”⁷²⁷

At least early on, then, it appears that the Soviet Union – with the MPLA at a distinct military disadvantage - was trying to take the high road in its position toward the Angolan situation, even while the United States took the low road by increasing its support for the FNLA.

In summarizing the preceding discussion about the reasons for the hiatus between the documented decision in December 1974 to supply increased arms to the MPLA and the alleged arrival of the first of these arms in March 1975, the following narrative, albeit based on limited evidence, presents a plausible explanation. First, in 1974 the MPLA was internally weakened and militarily inferior to the FNLA, which was receiving both military training and weapons support from Zaire and China. This was occurring while word was getting around, as John Stockwell tells us, that the Americans had also dealt themselves into the game. There is little doubt that Soviet officials in both Kinshasa and Luanda reported these events to Moscow. In late 1974, then, a limited quantity of Soviet

⁷²⁷ Ibid. The authors credit Ambassador Afanassenko, in Brazzaville, for the Soviet decision, at least initially, to back a peaceful settlement to the Angolan situation. After the December 1974 weapons re-supply decision, “The Soviet ambassador...warned against the danger of becoming embroiled in a civil war in which, he predicted, US and Chinese support would give the ‘reactionaries’ ...the upper hand.” They also argue that as late as the fall of 1975, before South Africa’s intervention, “The Politburo, like the Foreign Ministry, was reluctant to take the risks of full-scale involvement in the Angolan civil war, and clung to the unrealistic hope that the Alvor Agreement could be resuscitated and the three liberation movements persuaded to settle their differences.” Ibid., 451.

arms probably did arrive in the Congo (Brazzaville) for transfer to the MPLA in an effort to strengthen the movement in relation to the growing military power of the FNLA.

Secondly, in early December 1974 following the November demonstrations of FNLA militancy, the Politburo decided to increase military support for the MPLA. The Soviet leaders probably based their decision on a worst-case scenario that assumed Holden Roberto would attempt, in the near future, to forcibly take power.⁷²⁸ Despite this contingency resupply plan and concern about the MPLA's weak position, the Kremlin apparently believed that the Popular Movement (and probably also Soviet interests) would be better served, at least before the FNLA assaults of late March 1975, by adhering to the provisions of the Alvor agreement and pursuing an alliance with UNITA as a way to offset the stronger FNLA. President Nyerere reinforced this viewpoint and also warned the Soviets about the negative reaction of African countries to any foreign intervention.

⁷²⁸ Ambassador Afanasenko in Brazzaville undoubtedly reinforced the Kremlin's viewpoint. As early as late December, he reported to the Central Committee's International Department that the MPLA faced tremendous problems on the military side. Westad tells us that the ambassador told Moscow, "Both the FNLA, now joined by Daniel Chipenda's MPLA rebels, and UNITA were in a strong position and would be equipped further by the Americans and Chinese. In the civil war, which the Ambassador predicted, the 'reactionaries' would initially have the initiative, and the MPLA would depend on 'material assistance from progressive countries all over the world' just to survive." Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 225. Later, in April, Ambassador Afanasenko told Moscow that the MPLA's fighting capability had already improved because of the Soviet assistance, while adding that he did not believe a civil war would erupt before Angola's independence (November 11) and even then, as Westad notes, he believed it could be avoided by political negotiations." Ibid., 226.

The Soviet Union, in effect, decided to give peace a chance in Angola by exercising restraint and intentionally delaying the delivery of weapons to the MPLA. That Kissinger and others preferred to explain the delay as the time Moscow needed to assemble and begin shipping the weapons and equipment, however, served the administration's purpose in further justifying the "modest" allocation of political money to the FNLA in January 1975.

The Extent of Soviet Weapons to the MPLA, Spring-Summer 1975

The amount of Soviet weapons and equipment provided to the MPLA in the first half of 1975 is difficult to accurately assess. There is very little available evidence on either the quantity or the quality of the weapons and equipment delivered. Also, as Piero Gleijeses has astutely pointed out, what little evidence is available is not only ambiguous and largely unverifiable, but also has evolved into the accepted, and unquestioned, conventional wisdom. Moreover, some of the most respected authorities on the Angolan Civil War cite the same sources, or each other, when they discuss this issue. For example, Leslie Gelb's September 1975 article on the subject is one of the most frequently referenced sources.⁷²⁹ John Marcum refers to the Gelb article to state that the

⁷²⁹ Leslie Gelb, "U.S., Soviet, China Reported Aiding Portugal, Angola," *New York Times*, September 25, 1975, 1. The journalist, citing "four United States officials" as his sources, reported the following arms deliveries from March-June 1975, including those provided by both Soviet Bloc and non-aligned nations (Algeria and Yugoslavia). "In March, several Soviet planes landed in the Congo Republic, Zaire's neighbor, with arms and equipment that were then shipped to Angola; in April, about 100 tons of arms

Soviet Union substantially increased its arms deliveries to the MPLA commencing in March 1975. Jiri Valenta, in turn, cites both this passage from Marcum's study as well as the Gelb report to allege the same thing.⁷³⁰

Making matters even worse, the other most frequently cited source for these arms deliveries is an article by Brigadier W.F.K. Thompson, which supposedly appeared in the April 11, 1975 edition of London's *Daily Telegraph*. As Gleijeses has shown, however, this article does not exist. "I turned to the *Daily Telegraph* to see for myself what Brigadier Thompson had to say. I found no article by a Brigadier Thompson and no report whatsoever about the arrival of the Soviet planes – not on April 11, or on any other day in 1975."⁷³¹ Still, Colin Legum and Tony Hodges, authors of *After Angola: The War over Southern Africa*, a highly respected study of the Angolan war, used the "stealth" article as the basis for the observation that in March, "several Soviet planes" had delivered arms to the MPLA in Brazzaville."⁷³²

were delivered in southern Angola by chartered aircraft; in April two Yugoslav vessels unloaded arms in Luanda, the capital of Angola; in May and June, four Soviet merchant ships unloaded vehicles, machine guns, bazookas, rifles and ammunition, off Angola, and two East German and one Algerian vessel delivered similar materials."

⁷³⁰ Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II, 259 and 436, note 148; Valenta, "Soviet Decisionmaking on the Intervention in Angola," 100 and 256, notes 29 and 30.

⁷³¹ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 348.

⁷³² Ibid. Although the Brigadier's article doesn't exist, the June 1975 interagency task force headed by Nathaniel Davis referred to the arrival of Russian cargo planes in March. The study reported that as many as six Soviet aircraft "off-loaded military equipment in Brazzaville in March for transshipment to Cabinda." National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa, "Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy Toward Angola," p. 50.

The journal *Conflict Studies* presented a more detailed picture of the arms pipeline than Leslie Gelb's article, including Soviet air and sea deliveries, and Yugoslav, East German, Greek-registry, Congolese and Algerian deliveries by month (March – August). Still, the article provided no sources for the information, so its data is highly suspect, which is probably why no one ever refers to it.⁷³³ Finally, John Stockwell, probably the most believable “source,” does tell us that in March, “the Soviet Union began significant arms shipments to the MPLA.”⁷³⁴ However, he doesn't tell us how he knew this or what “significant” meant in terms of actual quantities delivered.

The daisy chain of citations, as well as the other problems noted above, all make the issue of untangling the truth of the alleged Soviet arms deliveries in the spring and summer of 1975 a most difficult task. Further complicating this problem, officials of the Ford Administration, in both private and public arenas, provided only ambiguous information, despite the fact that the alleged spring-summer delivery of Soviet weapons was a crucial element in the Ford Administration's justification for the July 18 decision to intervene in Angola. Those deliveries, officials assert, emboldened the MPLA and demonstrated that the Soviet Union and its Angolan client, in clear violation of the Alvor accord, were trying to impose their own military solution.

⁷³³ “Angola after Independence: Struggle for Supremacy,” *Conflict Studies*, no. 64 (November 1975): 13-14.

⁷³⁴ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 68.

Administration officials appeared, more often than not, to be at a loss when discussing either the quantity or quality of weapons and equipment provided by the Soviet Union. This was probably pure dissembling, as I will discuss later, but it led them to couch their statements in vague, and sometimes, misleading language. For example, the Davis-led task force's response to NSSM 224, in mid-June 1975, apparently couldn't make up its collective mind. The study first noted, "The Soviet Union has long backed the MPLA, and there is evidence it has lately provided the movement with considerable new military equipment." Later in the study, we find this statement. "We are unable to determine the quantity of military assistance being provided by the USSR and other communist countries. In Soviet terms the magnitude probably is not great, but for the MPLA material assistance from communist countries is of major significance."⁷³⁵ A few days later, Kissinger briefed the National Security Council on Angola, remarking, "While we don't know the exact quantity of military assistance the Soviets are providing the MPLA, this assistance is of major significance, and the Soviets could be expected to play a major role in an MPLA-dominated Angola."⁷³⁶ One wonders, of course, that if "we" don't know the quantities of arms delivered, how could "we" possibly know that it "is of major significance?"

⁷³⁵ National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa, "Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy Toward Angola," June 13, 1975, pp. 3, 50.

⁷³⁶ "Meeting of the National Security Council," June 27, 1975, p. 4.

Part of the problem with these vague references to significant arms deliveries perhaps arose from the lack of primary intelligence sources at Pointe Noire and Brazzaville. As Edward Mulcahy, William Schaufele's deputy in State's African Bureau noted, the United States had had no official representation in the Congo since 1966. The information on what he described as "the fairly liberal inflow" of Soviet weapons from March to June 1975 came from the "Portuguese."⁷³⁷ Just who these "Portuguese" sources were is not clear, although the June 1975 response to NSSM 224 noted that the Portuguese High Commissioner in Luanda (then Brigadier Silva Cardoso) had reported "a steady supply of military equipment has been delivered to the MPLA since at least October 1974."⁷³⁸ Perhaps Cardoso's office, then, was the basis for American estimates on the amount of arms delivered. If so, then Mulcahy was being deceptive in his testimony. He spoke of "Soviet" arms deliveries, while the High Commissioner's report, as cited in the response to NSSM 224, did not specify what country (or countries) was delivering the arms.

This, in turn, brings us to yet another problem with trying to determine just how much military equipment was delivered, and by whom, to the MPLA in the first half of 1975. While I am not disputing that Soviet arms, but of an unknown quantity, did reach the

⁷³⁷ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 182.

⁷³⁸ National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa, "Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy toward Angola," June 13, 1975, p. 50.

MPLA during this time frame - a point that the MPLA itself confirmed - what little information is available indicates that the bulk of the weapons and military equipment came by ships, most of which were neither Soviet nor even Soviet-bloc. In fact, during these critical early months of 1975, Yugoslavia seems to have been the MPLA's main supplier, and it is highly doubtful that the independent and non-aligned Yugoslav's were doing Moscow's bidding.

Based on his interviews with Portuguese and MPLA officials, Piero Gleijeses makes a strong argument that Yugoslavia was the primary military support for the Popular Movement.⁷³⁹ The MPLA admitted that "some" Soviet weapons and equipment arrived during this time frame, but "they were of lesser importance" to that delivered by Yugoslavia. MPLA leader, Paulo Jorge iterated the importance of Yugoslavia's support for the MPLA during this time frame when he told Gleijeses, "Until August 1975 [when

⁷³⁹Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, pp. 348-349. Gleijeses quotes Ernesto Melo Antunes, the Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs during this time frame, and a man whom Kissinger considered "a moderate," as stating that "Through the summer of 1975... 'the big cargo of weapons...for the MPLA came from Yugoslavia.'" Ibid., 348. Originally quoted in Maria Joao Avelaz, *Do Fundo da Revolucao* (Lisbon: Publico, 1994), 28. Further, the MPLA leaders whom he interviewed stated that the first shipment of weapons came from Algeria in response to a December 1974 request from Agostinho Neto, and this delivery, in early 1975, was followed by the well-documented arrival of the Yugoslavian freighter, *Postoyna*, in Luanda in late April. Portuguese authorities turned the ship away, and it proceeded to Pointe Noire where it unloaded its military cargo, which was then transported by smaller craft into Angola. As Gleijeses points out, "This was the 'big cargo' mentioned by Colonel Antunes. A scale model of the *Postoyna* is displayed in the War Museum in Luanda." Ibid., 349. The much-reported story of the arrival of the *Postoyna* in Luanda, and the refusal of the Portuguese authorities to permit it to unload, is also discussed in *Conflict Studies*, "Angola after Independence," 13, and "Angola: 500 Dead in Worst Fighting to Date," May 10, 1975 [Database on-line]; available from *World News Digest: Facts on File*.

the Cuban military mission was established] the country that helped the MPLA the most was Yugoslavia.”⁷⁴⁰

The MPLA’s discussion with members of the Cuban delegation that visited Luanda in early August 1975, preparatory to the establishment of the Cuban Military Mission in Angola, further substantiates the claim that the Soviet deliveries of weapons to the MPLA up to this point “were of lesser importance.” According to the official report of the meeting, “In the course of this conversation, the Angolans complained about the paucity of aid from the socialist camp... whereas the imperialists, Mobutu and [one word sanitized] are helping the FNLA in every way possible way. They also complained that the Soviet Union stopped aiding them in 1972 and that although it is now sending them weapons, the amount is paltry given the enormity of the need.”⁷⁴¹

Finally, when Soviet arms did start arriving for the MPLA, in late March 1975, they came first by air according to the NSSM 224 study, probably as a rapid response to the FNLA’s offensive against the MPLA. The use of a limited number of cargo aircraft – no more than six according to the NSSM - also limited the amounts of weaponry and equipment that could be delivered, even if they were the large Soviet AN-12s and AN-

⁷⁴⁰ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 349.

⁷⁴¹ Document: Raul Diaz Arguelles to the Armed Forces Minister [Raul Castro], 11 August 1975, “Report on the Visit to Angola and on the Conversations Held with Agostinho Neto, President of the MPLA, and the Political Bureau of the MPLA, as well as with Chiefs of the Army Staff of the FAPLA [the MPLA’s Armed Forces]” [Database on-line]; available from Cold War International History Project (<http://cwihip.si.edu>).

22s.⁷⁴² In effect, the March airlift amounted to a dress rehearsal for the later Soviet airlift, in late October 1975, which was in response to the large-scale South African invasion.⁷⁴³

Thus, the “elaborate plan” the Kremlin drew up in December never materialized during the first half of 1975. Moscow apparently decided that implementation of the large-scale contingency logistics operation was not needed at the time, because the MPLA was able to use what arms the Soviets had delivered, as well as the military aid provided mostly by Yugoslavia, to turn the tables on the FNLA. According to Westad, although Ambassador Afanassenko, in Brazzaville, had informed the Kremlin in mid-April that the MPLA’s fighting capabilities had improved because of Soviet assistance already provided, the Soviets were surprised at the effectiveness of the MPLA’s counter-

⁷⁴² National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa, “Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy Toward Angola,” June 13, 1975, p. 50. Jiri Valenta reported that the Soviet used AN-12s and AN-22s for the March deliveries of arms. Valenta, “Soviet Decision-Making,” 100. If one can put any stock in either Gelb’s late September report or the article in *Conflict Studies* on arms deliveries to the MPLA, then Soviet cargo ships did not begin arriving in the vicinity of Angola until May and June. Gelb reported the arrival of four Soviet arms-laden merchant ships during that two-month period; *Conflict Studies* reported the arrival of five Soviet ships at Pointe Noire in May. Depending on the port of origin and specific arrival date (which was not given by either), if these were actual Soviet ships, they probably departed Soviet waters in March or early April, if not later. Gelb, “U.S., Soviet, China Reported Aiding Portugal, Angola,” 1, and *Conflict Studies*, “Angola after Independence,” 13-14.

⁷⁴³ The CIA discussed the Soviet Union’s rapid response to the South African intervention in an after-action report on the Angolan conflict. The Agency noted, “On October 23, Moscow media reported the MPLA charge that South African troops were advancing on Sa da Bandeira [in southern Angola]. The close timing of the South African intervention and the beginning of the Soviet airlift is suggestive of some causal link. [words deleted] the Soviets needed about a week to get the airlift in operation: six days elapsed between the South African attack on Sa da Bandeira and the departure of the first Soviet airplane.” Central Intelligence Agency, “Soviet and Cuban Intervention in the Angolan Civil War,” March 1, 1977 (estimated publication date), pp. 27-28 [Database on-line]; available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov>.

offensive against the National Front in June. Given the Popular Movement's demonstrated military capabilities, Westad informs us, "Moscow now seemed to have the recipe for success in Angola. *By a limited supply of military equipment* (my emphasis) it believed to have had secured for the MPLA the upper hand in the fighting."⁷⁴⁴ He adds, however, that despite the increasing potential for a violent solution, Moscow still anticipated that the Angolan war would eventually be resolved through negotiations. "Moscow expected that the rival movements, or at least UNITA, would return to the negotiating table and become part of an MPLA-led government."⁷⁴⁵

The Intelligence Question

As discussed, Mulcahy and others claimed that Washington did not have good intelligence on the Soviet Union's deliveries of arms to the MPLA in the first half of 1975. I question their assertion and believe that it was dissembling. This assessment is based on my own experience as a Soviet naval analyst. I worked within the Navy's Ocean Surveillance Information System for a number of years, including during the 1970s. I am familiar with the available intelligence assets, as well as the time and effort, employed in tracking the movements of Soviet, Soviet-bloc and, in general, Communist cargo ships and aircraft, particularly those suspected of carrying weapons and deploying to "areas of interest." The most difficult problem, from an intelligence-gathering aspect,

⁷⁴⁴ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 225.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid.

would be identifying the nature of the cargo itself. Assuming little or no on-the-ground collection resources in the Congo, American intelligence analysts were largely left to speculate on what was aboard the aircraft and ships arriving there.⁷⁴⁶

Given this, I believe that Kissinger and other officials of the Ford Administration had a better grasp than they admitted to on the numbers and national identities of sea and airborne carriers delivering their cargos to the Congo. They probably did not have reliable information, however, on the kind of cargo onboard. Despite this, they argued, as they apparently did in the case of East Germany, that the ships and aircraft were loaded with military weapons and equipment. A number of East German freighters did deliver materiel to the MPLA in the first half of 1975. Piero Gleijeses' review of East German documents, however, reveals that between January and June 1975, four East German ships delivered humanitarian aid, including food, clothing and medical supplies. Moreover, "Military aid did not begin until September 1975, contrary to CIA reporting."⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴⁶ Some Soviet, Soviet-bloc and other high-interest Communist merchant ships, because of their military-related deployment history, were assumed, a priori, to be carrying arms. They were tracked more closely than others. Also, there might be an exception to speculation about the kinds of cargo. That is, military-related vehicles, such as trucks or armored and tracked vehicles, were sometimes carried, uncovered or partially covered, on the freighters' decks. It would obviously be possible to identify these as "military" cargo from overhead photography.

⁷⁴⁷ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 349-350. Sweden was also providing humanitarian assistance to the MPLA - \$2 million during the first half of 1975 – but I am not aware of how this non-military aid reached the MPLA. "Memorandum of Conversation between Olaf Palme, Prime Minister of Sweden, and Henry

Additionally, administration spokesmen purposely exaggerated the extent of strictly Soviet deliveries during this time frame by lumping Soviet support, along with non-Soviet bloc military assistance, such as that of Yugoslavia, into the all-encompassing, but attention-getting, “Communist” category. They used this deceptive strategy to further justify the American decision to intervene in Angola, arguing that it was in response to a large infusion of Soviet and Communist arms to the MPLA in the spring and early summer of 1975.⁷⁴⁸

Conclusion

The Ford Administration laid the blame for the Angolan crisis squarely at Moscow’s doorstep. From a chronological viewpoint, Washington’s official spokesmen on the conflict consistently argued that it was the Soviet Union’s arming of the MPLA, starting in the fall of 1974 and accelerating throughout the first half of 1975 that encouraged Neto’s military forces to attack the FNLA in the spring of 1975. In doing so, the Soviet-supported Popular Movement was largely responsible for destroying the Alvor agreement

Kissinger and Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Subject: Portugal; Angola; Israel-UN; UNGA” July 30, 1975, pp. 5-6 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive.

⁷⁴⁸ Soviet military support to the MPLA, as well as that of Cuba, including the arrival of Cuban combatants starting in early November, accelerated greatly after the invasion by large elements of the South African Defense Force in October 1975. As Gleijeses notes, “There is no question that in this phase Soviet-bloc involvement in men and materiel far outweighed that of the West, and that foreign troops – Cubans and South Africans – were the true protagonists on the battlefield. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 347. Up to this point, however, it appears that the multifarious support for both sides to the conflict was about equal, despite what administration officials alleged. Gleijeses makes this point (*Ibid.*, 350-351), as does John Marcum in *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II, 263.

and for precipitating the civil war. While the United States provided a small amount of financial assistance to Holden Roberto in January 1975, this came only after the Soviet decision to escalate their military support to the MPLA. Moreover, the \$300,000 was only a political subsidy. According to Henry Kissinger, to argue that its allocation “triggered all subsequent escalations...is an absurdity.”⁷⁴⁹ The July 18th American decision to intervene came only after Soviet arms emboldened the MPLA, whose increasing militancy demonstrated that its objective, and that of the Soviet Union, was to control Angola’s future.

As I have demonstrated, the administration’s argument is based on deceptions, false assumptions, and sometimes mere speculation. It was, in fact, American actions, beginning first with the CIA’s increased support to Holden Roberto in July 1974, which began the chain of events that led to the FNLA’s unsuccessful attempts to eliminate the MPLA in late 1974 and then again in the spring of 1975. The enhanced American support, while small as John Stockwell has told us, was still noticeable, as it was no doubt intended to be. Further, it ran alongside the ongoing Zairian and Chinese training and weapons programs and occurred while the MPLA had been significantly weakened through its internal divisions.⁷⁵⁰ Because of the latter, July of 1974 found the Soviet

⁷⁴⁹ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795.

⁷⁵⁰ The FNLA also received military training from a North Korean military contingent, but the latter’s primary mission was to train Mobutu’s elite Kamanyola Division. Also, the Romanians gave an

Union sitting on the sidelines, having discontinued its support to the MPLA some eighteen months earlier.

The agreements reached on the island of Sal and in Kinshasa, in September and October, respectively, which notably excluded the Neto faction of the internally split MPLA, further boosted the National Front's prospects for dominating Angola. Roberto wasted no time in taking advantage of this fortuitous set of circumstances. Although his attempts to eliminate, or marginalize, the MPLA in November 1974 proved unsuccessful and he had to temporarily settle for the Alvor agreement, he received another shot of confidence from the Americans in late January 1975 when the Forty Committee authorized \$300,000 for the FNLA. Contrary to what Ford Administration officials publicly asserted, the Soviet Union no doubt noticed the effects of the increased American support on the FNLA's subsequent behavior. This was intended, as it was in keeping with Kissinger's belief that Washington had to be tough on issues involving American credibility in order to give "the Soviet Union an incentive 'to keep its head down,' when challenged."⁷⁵¹

undetermined amount of military assistance to the FNLA and UNITA in 1974-1975. At the same time, however, they continued material support for the MPLA. The North Koreans, like the Chinese, withdrew their training contingent in late 1975; in December of that year, Romania stopped their assistance to the FNLA and UNITA. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II, 164-165; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, notes a and b, 351.

⁷⁵¹ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 809. See my note 692 for a brief discussion of Kissinger's assumption that challenging the Soviet Union through an active American involvement would deter Moscow.

Given Kissinger's bleak outlook on the prospects for peaceful political processes in Africa, he probably expected that Roberto would decide to resolve the issue through military force. Holden Roberto did not disappoint his Washington benefactors. In March, the FNLA launched its spring 1975 offensive against the MPLA, now further militarily weakened by the defection of Daniel Chipenda. Thereafter, John Stockwell tells us, as Roberto's fighters began attacking the MPLA in Luanda and elsewhere, "The fate of Angola was then sealed in blood. The issue could only be decided through violence."⁷⁵²

From Kissinger's perspective, having been told by his staff at the State Department and by the CIA that the National Front was militarily superior to the MPLA and could

⁷⁵² Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 68. I do not agree with this assessment. As shown, the Soviet Union was acting in a very restrained manner at this point of the conflict and would probably have been open to discussions with the United States about the situation, including enhanced super-power support for the Portuguese and OAU efforts to resolve the situation peacefully. This, of course, would have guaranteed an MPLA presence in Angola's future government. Despite official pronouncements that the United States had nothing against the MPLA, per se, this simply was not true. Kissinger, especially, did not want Communist participation in Angola's future government because he was strongly inclined to believe that once the Communists became part of the government, they would eventually take over. This belief, of course, was in keeping with his ideas about Communist participation in the governments of Western Europe and the Allende government in Chile. For Kissinger's antipathy to Communist (hence "MPLA") participation in the Angolan government, see for example, his discussions with President Ford on June 6 and 16, 1975, in which he told the president, "I don't think we want the Communists there" and "We don't want to see a Communist government in Angola," respectively. "Memorandum of Conversation between President Ford and Dr. Henry A Kissinger," June 6, 1975, p. 4 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts; "Memorandum of Conversation between President Ford and Dr. Henry Kissinger," June 16, 1975, p. 2, National Security Advisor – Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, June 16, 1975 – Ford, Kissinger, Box 12, Gerald R. Ford Library.

more than hold its own, the \$300,000 was a sufficient expenditure.⁷⁵³ He expected the FNLA to fight and win, thereby preempting Communism in Angola, and garnering for the United States a significant return on its “modest” investment.

While officials of the Ford Administration sought to justify the American intervention as a response to aggressive Soviet expansionism, the available evidence shows this allegation was not true. The FAPLA (People’s Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola - MPLA) launched its successful counteroffensive against Roberto’s forces in June with a limited quantity of Soviet arms, most of which were delivered only after Roberto’s March violence against the MPLA. It was primarily Yugoslavia’s important military assistance, and the ability of the MPLA’s fighters to effectively employ the arms they were given, that saved the Popular Movement from the attempts of the FNLA, in both late 1974 and early 1975, to expel it from Luanda and to eliminate it as a viable party in Angola’s future government.

In sum, the actions of the United States precipitated the events that led to the Angolan Civil War. In contrast, the Soviet Union showed restraint and caution. The MPLA did not, as the administration alleged, receive any Soviet-supplied arms from the OAU’s

⁷⁵³ During the Forty Committee meeting on January 22, the CIA had touted its man, Holden Roberto, as the leader the United States should back. In an early July meeting with his State Department staff, Kissinger apparently alluded back to the January meeting and subsequent discussions on the same subject. He noted that he had been told “for six months that Holden Roberto was in great shape,” and that “the conventional wisdom until two months ago is that Holden Roberto was doing great.” Department of State, “Secretary’s Staff Meeting; Attached to Decision Summary,” July 14, 1975, pp. 42-43 [Database on-line]; available from Digital National Security Archive, Kissinger Transcripts.

Liberation Committee in 1974. When the movement did receive some Soviet weapons later in 1974, via the Congo (Brazzaville), these deliveries were intended, as Kissinger admitted, to level the playing field with the militarily superior FNLA.

As regards the administration's allegations of "significant" Soviet deliveries to the MPLA in the first half of 1975, it is apparent that the Kremlin took several months to make up its mind to intervene on the MPLA's behalf. When the Soviets did act, in response to the FNLA attacks against the MPLA in March, they downscaled their "elaborate plan of heavy weapons and large amounts of ammunition" to "a limited supply of military equipment," as Westad notes. Stockwell's Angolan desk officer, the anonymous Brenda MacElhinney, then, was right on the mark when she informed him, in July 1975, that the Soviet Union did not move first in Angola, but was a step behind, "countering our moves."⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵⁴ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 66.

CONCLUSION

EXPLAINING AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY: WHAT DO WE NOW KNOW?

*“It is a lesson never learned: Matters of state...that start
with a lie rarely end well.”*

Maureen Dowd⁷⁵⁵

In this study, I have examined the Angolan crisis, with the objective of identifying and explaining the reasons for the American intervention of the mid-1970s. My efforts have concentrated on answering two questions: Why did the United States become involved, and which super power, the United States or the Soviet Union, was the primary provocateur in escalating the Angolan conflict into a Cold War crisis? As I explained in my introduction, the answers to both questions will help us determine which of the two sides of the historical debate within the Diplomatic History community, Traditionalism or Revisionism, has been most accurate in their assumptions and arguments about the motivations and nature of American foreign policy, particularly as they apply to the expansion of the Cold War to the periphery. Moreover, as I discussed, since officials of the Ford Administration, as well as the Pike Committee, suggested that America's African “friends” may have influenced the intervention decision, I also investigated Washington's involvement in Angola from a pericentric perspective, using historian Tony Smith's development of that framework as the basis for my analysis.

⁷⁵⁵ Maureen Dowd, “Defining Victory Down,” *New York Times*, January 9, 2005, 13.

Based on the available evidence, my major findings, each of which will be discussed in more detail in the following pages, are as follows. First, from a broad historical perspective, there has been a remarkable consistency in American policy toward southern Africa. Within that context, the American intervention in Angola should not be seen as an aberration or anomaly. With the exception of two years during the Kennedy Administration, Washington's Cold War policies in the region supported the status quo and sought to prevent, or at least contain, Communist influence.

Secondly, and specifically as it relates to Angola, the primary reason for the American intervention was to restore American credibility, which the president and his advisers, principally Kissinger again, believed had been dangerously undermined by the American involvement in Vietnam. They were particularly concerned with the perception, if not the reality, that as a result of that war, American global hegemony was declining and that this would endanger the international balance of power. There was, however, a twist to the administration's credibility argument. While officials publicly stressed the deterrent component of credibility, alleging that American warnings without resolute action would only encourage Communist adventurism beyond Angola, the commitment side of credibility was actually foremost in the thoughts of the president and Kissinger. Most importantly as it related to this component of American power, Angola presented Washington with the opportunity to reassert its leadership within the Western alliance

and to reinvigorate the Chinese-American relationship, a crucial element of triangular diplomacy.

Thirdly, in justifying its actions as a necessary response to Soviet aggression, officials of the Ford Administration intentionally misrepresented to both the Congress and the American public not only the American role in the Angola conflict, but also that of the Soviet Union. Their account – the official mythology - consistently downplayed the significance of the January \$300,000 allocation to the FNLA, while finagling the timing and exaggerating the extent of renewed Soviet military assistance to the MPLA.

Fourthly, while Zambia, Zaire and South Africa were part of the anti-MPLA coalition, with varying roles to play in a kind of pro-Western division of labor, they neither individually, nor collectively, overly influenced the American decision to intervene. Rather, it was the White House's preoccupation with rescuing American credibility and the opportunity to do so in a demonstrable way by, as one official put it, "facing off with the Russians," that primarily influenced the president's decision to authorize the CIA's covert operation.

Finally, as it pertains to the contending schools of thought on American Cold War policy, the Revisionist framework best explains the case of American intervention in Angola. Revisionism tells us that we should suspect that the United States would be the principal provocateur in Angola, given its pattern of interventions in the periphery.

Based on the available evidence, this appears to have been the case as the United States, through its early support to the FNLA, was most responsible for escalating this episode into a Cold War crisis. That support, augmenting Zairian and Chinese military assistance, encouraged the FNLA to sabotage the Alvor accord. This, in turn, led to a full-fledged civil war and paved the way for the other large-scale interventions which followed, including that of the South Africans, Cuba, and the Soviet Union.

Angola and American Policy in Southern Africa

American policy toward sub-Saharan Africa during the Cold War consistently sought to maintain stability through support of the status quo and denial of Communist influence. Consequently, the United States most often aligned itself with colonialism, neo-colonialism, and in the case of non-state actors, those whom Washington perceived as best protecting existing conditions. As discussed in Chapter 1, the only departure from this distinguishing element of Washington's southern African policy occurred during the Kennedy Administration, and then only for a period lasting less than two years.

Given these objectives and the accompanying mind set, the United States viewed most African liberation movements as terrorists, Communists, or both. Whatever labels the American foreign policy elite assigned to them, Washington viewed them as a threat to the status quo, especially as they turned to the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of

China, or other Communist nations for support in their struggles against the minority white rulers and colonial masters, largely because they had nowhere else to turn.

Within this historical context, the CIA and many officials in the State Department were quick to brand both Agostinho Neto and his Popular Movement as Marxist-Leninist because the group had received most of its support from the Soviet Union since the mid-1950s. This characterization fit neatly into Washington's long-established, simplistic, and often meaningless system of compartmentalizing individuals and movements as either pro-American or pro-Communist, thereby justifying American support of colonialism and neo-colonialism. It also rationalized the United States' general bias against national liberation movements, particularly those espousing leftist agendas and non-alignment.

Kissinger and others publicly proclaimed they were not anti-MPLA, per se, only its attempts to militarily impose its dominion over the majority of Angolans with the help of the Soviet Union and its Cuban proxies. This was simply not true. As the Popular Movement began to demonstrate its superiority over the FNLA in the late spring of 1975, an agitated Henry Kissinger told President Ford, more than once, that he didn't think "we" wanted a Communist government in Angola.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵⁶ See note 752 on p. 417 for Kissinger's antipathy to the MPLA.

The Ford Administration's frequent depiction of the MPLA as Communist-controlled and Moscow-dominated was disingenuous and ignored the counsel of its most informed officials. As late as October 1975, with American arms pouring into the FNLA and UNITA and the South African Defense Force advancing rapidly towards Luanda, the MPLA was still not committed to either Moscow or Havana. As John Stockwell tells us, Neto sent a delegation to Washington in late October to "plead the MPLA's potential friendliness towards the United States." He adds that a "low-level" State Department official received the delegation and "reported perfunctorily to the working group."⁷⁵⁷

Donald Easum, while Assistant Secretary of State, Tom Killoran, the American Consul General in Luanda in 1974-1975, and Robert Hultslander, the CIA Station Chief in Luanda in mid-late 1975, all believed that the MPLA desired friendly relations with the United States so as not to become dependent on the Soviet Union. Even Hultslander, despite his initial "CIA bias" against the MPLA, came to view them as the best qualified to govern Angola. While he believed that some of the movement's leadership was at least outwardly Communist, he thought that Neto and some of his closest advisers were "more moderate." However, the United States, "instead of working with the moderate

⁷⁵⁷ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 193,

elements in Angola, which I believe we could have found within the MPLA... supported the radical, tribal, “anti-Soviet right.”⁷⁵⁸

Moreover, despite American economic warfare against the MPLA, which included pressuring the Gulf Oil Company to suspend operations in Cabinda in December 1975, and to withhold millions of dollars in royalties, the MPLA continued to voice their willingness to work toward better relations with the United States.⁷⁵⁹ Senator Tunney’s aide, Mark Moran, carried this message back to the Senate in late January after his talks with the MPLA leadership in Luanda. Among other things, Moran’s report noted that Prime Minister Lopo de Nascimento, Secretary of State Bentu Rubiero, and Lucio Lara, General Secretary of the MPLA, all indicated their interests in improving relations with the United States and their willingness to “take concrete steps in that direction.” On the issue of Angola’s future foreign policy course, the same leaders very clearly stated their desire to pursue a non-aligned foreign policy. While they acknowledged the MPLA’s “special relationship” with the Soviet Union as a consequence of Moscow’s assistance

⁷⁵⁸ “Interview with Robert W. Hultslander, former CIA Station Chief in Luanda, Angola,” Interview by Piero Gleijeses, 1998 [database on-line]; available from The National Security Archive, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv>.

⁷⁵⁹ Michael T. Kaufman, “Angolan Leftist Charges U.S. with Economic War,” *New York Times*, February 1, 1976, 1. In addition to the State Department’s pressure on Gulf Oil, Washington also prohibited the delivery to Angola of two Boeing 747s, which had already been paid for. In February 1976, Washington permitted Gulf Oil to restart its operations in Cabinda and allowed the company to release the \$200 million in royalties owned to the Angolan government. It also permitted the delivery of the Boeing aircraft. On the American economic actions against the new MPLA government, see also Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 167-168.

during the civil war, these top officials stressed that they had no intention of becoming anyone's "satellite."⁷⁶⁰

Despite all this, the United States refused to recognize or even deal informally with the new government in Angola. Besides closing its consulate in Luanda in early November, Washington also launched a diplomatic offensive in December. Its objective was to deny OAU recognition of the MPLA. The effort was only partially and temporarily successful, as half of the OAU (twenty-two members) did recognize the MPLA as the official Angolan government in early January. Within a little over a month, however, the majority of African nations, including Zaire, had official diplomatic relations with Angola.

The American intervention in Angola and Washington's anti-MPLA actions in the immediate aftermath of the movement's victory demonstrate the continuity in the United States' attitude and policies toward sub-Saharan political developments during the Cold War. These policies up to and including the intervention proved counterproductive not only to the historical American objectives of promoting stability and denying or limiting Communist influence, but also to Washington's post-Vietnam attempt to rehabilitate its credibility.

⁷⁶⁰ Senate, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, February 6, 1976, 168, 169.

First, the United States' early assistance, both in 1974 and January 1975, emboldened Holden Roberto and his FNLA. The National Front's militant actions quickly led to the escalation of what was initially a personal and inter-ethnic rivalry into an all-out civil war and a Cold War crisis. Secondly, Washington's efforts to economically and diplomatically isolate the MPLA left the Popular Movement with few options but to continue to rely on the Soviet Union, Cuba, and the Eastern bloc, in general. Thirdly, American-South African cooperation against the MPLA weakened American credibility throughout black Africa. It also undermined Washington's 11th hour diplomatic effort to persuade the OAU not to recognize the MPLA and to instead call for a government of national unity and the withdrawal of all foreign forces. Importantly, the South African intervention made the role of the Soviet Union and Cuba in the civil war more palatable to the majority of nations in the OAU. A letter to President Ford from generally pro-American Ghana's military head of state expressed these negative effects of the American-South African alliance.

Noting that he considered American anxiety over the unstable situation in Angola as a legitimate concern, Colonel I. K. Acheampong told the president that the actions of the Soviet Union and Cuba did not mean they were "trying to impose a government on the people of Angola by force of arms." For a long time, he added, both the Soviet Union and Cuba had helped the "freedom fighters" of Angola against the Portuguese fascists.

The OAU, and Ghana as a member of its Liberation Committee, had endorsed this support. Consequently, “It would neither be just, correct, nor easy for us to label such support today as intervention.” In contrast, he characterized the South African intervention as unacceptable aggression as “South Africa is the acclaimed foe of all Africa.”⁷⁶¹

Rescuing American Credibility

In arguing that restoring American credibility, especially with the Western Europeans and Chinese, was the principal reason for the United States’ involvement in Angola, I have suggested that we must primarily look to the long and ultimately unsuccessful American effort in Vietnam. The 1973 Paris Peace Accords represented a temporary and short-lived resuscitation of the shattered American global image and earned Henry Kissinger the Nobel Peace Prize. Two years later, however, the South Vietnamese government and ARVN were unable to prevent a North Vietnamese victory, despite years of massive American military and economic support.

Both President Ford and Henry Kissinger believed the war and its humiliating end had dangerously undermined the believability of Washington’s promises to friends and allies

⁷⁶¹ “Head of State and Chairman of the Supreme Military Council Letter to President Ford,” January 8, 1976, pp. 1-2, White House Country Files, Subject File, ND18/CO7, Wars/Angola, Box 32, Gerald R. Ford Library. The Colonel’s letter to President Ford was in response to the latter’s own letter of January 3, 1976, which urged Ghana not to support OAU recognition of the MPLA in the upcoming meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Ghana did support the MPLA’s recognition, despite Washington’s diplomatic offensive against the MPLA.

and its warnings and threats to adversaries. This major consequence of the war adversely affected at least the perception of the global balance of power, or as Kissinger frequently referred to it, “international equilibrium.” As he explained during an interview with NBC shortly after the fall of Saigon, “There is in almost every major event a domino effect.” This was the result of a change in the balance of forces, the perception of other countries, and “the general psychological climate that is created in the world as to who is advancing and who is withdrawing. This is inevitable.”⁷⁶² Given this conviction, the White House was determined to change the post-Vietnam global mindset that, as President Ford and Kissinger believed, saw the United States as retreating and the Soviet Union as advancing.

While the Mayaguez rescue operation provided a timely, if very limited, opportunity for the United States to demonstrate its resolve, the incident lacked an important element. The villain was Cambodia, not the emerging new super power, the Soviet Union. In Angola, however, the Soviet Union’s traditional support for the MPLA, which they actually suspended from 1973-late 1974, made them the opportunistic target for Washington’s anti-Communist rhetoric. Importantly, as I have argued, while the administration’s increasingly harsh criticisms of the Soviet involvement in Angola dominated the public arena, behind closed doors, Kissinger, especially, stressed the link

⁷⁶² Rosenfeld, “Kissinger’s Postwar Confusion.” Rosenfeld’s article in *The Washington Post*, as previously cited, directly quotes this part of Kissinger’s interview with NBC.

between a determined show of force in Angola and America's relationship with Western Europe and China. These private conversations reveal that he was most concerned with what they would think about the believability of American promises to them, and the consequences for continued American dominance of the global anti-Soviet bloc, if the United States were to simply "cut and run" in Angola.

This commitment side of credibility, of course, related directly to the issue of reinvigorating American leadership and dominance of the Atlantic Alliance, which had been weakened both by the long conflict in Southeast Asia and the related coincidental rise of Euro-détente and Euro-Communism. Moreover, as their December 1975 conversations with the Chinese leadership showed, President Ford and Henry Kissinger were determined to re-energize the flagging Washington-Beijing relationship, which was crucial to the viability of the American-constructed triangular diplomacy. Although they were unsuccessful in persuading the Chinese to rejoin the anti-MPLA coalition in Angola, it was not because of lack of effort.

Unraveling the Official Mythology

As I have argued, officials of the Ford Administration misrepresented and exaggerated the Soviet role in Angola, especially the timing and extent of its assistance to the MPLA from late 1974 to at least mid-1975. They also downplayed the crucial role played by Cuba in the late summer and fall of 1975, instead labeling the Cubans as Soviet proxies

who were, as Kissinger explained, “pressured by Moscow to repay the Soviet Union for its military and economic support.”⁷⁶³ Although the Secretary of State admitted to Havana’s initiative in support of the MPLA at least as early as February 1976, in late 1975, this tactic allowed Washington to demonize the Soviet Union and inflate the Communist threat. Cuba, the “mouse that roared,” simply would not do, especially if Washington wanted the Western Europeans and Chinese to follow the American lead in Angola.

The administration’s criticisms of what they alleged was Soviet adventurism in an area where Moscow had no traditional interests was little more than a propaganda effort aimed at building congressional and public support for its own intervention. In the course of that effort, they described the American involvement as a belated and modest response to Soviet aggression, which came only after repeated requests from America’s African friends for Washington’s assistance.

As I have demonstrated, however, it was two American decisions that largely paved the way for the increasing violence and for the further militarization and internationalization of the Angolan crisis. The first decision, although it remains unclear who made it, perhaps Colby with Kissinger’s approval, involved the CIA’s enhanced support for Holden Roberto in July 1974. This action complemented the on-going

⁷⁶³ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 816.

Zairian and Chinese military assistance and set the stage for Roberto's militant actions in November of 1974 against the MPLA.

The second decision, that of the Forty Committee's authorization of \$300,000 to the FNLA in January 1975, further encouraged the bellicose FNLA leader. In March, in the first major violation of the Alvor accord, the FNLA began a series of intensifying attacks on its long-time rival. The MPLA responded, if slowly at first. By early July, however, the Popular Movement had succeeded in expelling the military forces of both the FNLA and UNITA from Luanda, Kissinger's often proclaimed "center of gravity." The American decision to intervene on a much larger scale followed shortly.

At this point, mid-July 1975, the Soviets had provided a limited amount of military assistance to the MPLA, which probably included the delivery of some arms and equipment to the MPLA via the Congo (Brazzaville) in late 1974, and the further delivery of military-related materiel, first by airlift, starting in late March 1975. The renewed Soviet support for the MPLA, initially in late 1974 and then in the spring of 1975, came on the heels of increased militancy by the FNLA, which left the already weakened MPLA in a very vulnerable position.

Moscow, apparently mindful of President Nyerere's warnings about foreign intervention in Angola, continued to support the Alvor agreement even as the FNLA escalated its attacks on the MPLA in the spring of 1975. The Kremlin designed its

renewed military assistance to prevent an MPLA military defeat and also pressed (unsuccessfully) the MPLA to form a coalition with UNITA, as Nyerere had urged. Only later, after the SADF invasion in mid-October, 1975, did the Soviet Union commence a large-scale military supply operation to the MPLA. By then, the Popular Movement, along with its Cuban advisers and trainers, was fighting a combined Zairian-FNLA force in the north, which included South African and American CIA advisers, and a UNITA-FNLA (Chipenda)-South African force moving rapidly northward toward Luanda from southern Angola.

In sum, it was simply not true when President Ford, Henry Kissinger and other administration officials declared that the Soviets intervened first, and massively, and that their military support to the MPLA, designed to put their client in power, destroyed the Alvor accord and escalated the Angolan situation into a Cold War crisis.

Explaining American Intervention in Angola: Pericentrism

As I discussed in my introduction and again in Chapter 6, historian Tony Smith has advanced the idea that Soviet and American behavior (and occasionally, that of the Chinese) in the periphery is sometimes best explained by examining the motivations of Third World leaders who used Cold War tensions to achieve or further their own self-centered objectives. It was in their interests, then, to help prolong the Cold War as they

received important military and economic support from one side or the other (and sometimes both).

Officials of the Ford Administration were quick to point out, if somewhat ambiguously, that America's African "friends" requested American assistance in countering the alleged "massive" Soviet support for the MPLA. Their assertions imply that these African appeals significantly affected the American decision to intervene. I do not believe that this was the case. As I have tried to show, the proximate cause for the American intervention decision was President Ford and Kissinger's determination to resuscitate American credibility not only with the Soviet Union, but also, and more importantly, with the Western Alliance and the People's Republic of China.

Throughout the Angolan conflict, Zambia was of little importance militarily, but administration officials used its alleged request for American military assistance to UNITA to help justify the American intervention. From the White House perspective, the well-respected Zambian president, Kenneth Kaunda, was of symbolic, but not especially substantive, significance.

Zaire and South Africa were very important, but junior, partners in the endeavor. President Mobutu was a necessary component of the covert operation because of his close relationship with Holden Roberto of the FNLA. Moreover, the port of Matadi and Kinshasa's airport provided the logistical starting points for equipment being sent into

both northern and southern Angola. Thus, as Kissinger admitted, while he didn't particularly like the Zairian strong man, he was the only show in town. Further, there was a diplomatic benefit: American assistance for the FNLA would help mend fences between Washington and Kinshasa in the wake of Mobutu's allegations that the United States had somehow been involved in the June coup against his regime.

The American intervention obviously advanced Mobutu's own objectives, including his hope for a compliant, and beholden, Roberto in charge of Angola and significant Zairian influence in Cabinda, if not outright control of the oil-rich enclave. One could interpret these self-serving interests as pericentric in nature. Mobutu certainly used Cold War rhetoric to warn Washington about the grave consequences for Zaire's future if the MPLA, supported by and dependent on Moscow, won in Angola. Still, without Kissinger's resolve to "face off against the Russians, right there in Angola," Mobutu's plans for Angola's future would probably have fallen on largely deaf ears.

South Africa's role was significant as it provided the majority of training, advisory and military support to UNITA, while also assisting the FNLA in northern Angola. Most importantly, as it affected the MPLA's eventual victory in the civil war, Pretoria's large-scale invasion, in mid-October 1975, prompted both Fidel Castro's early November decision to send Cuban combatants to assist the MPLA and the Soviet Union's own enhanced support in the fall of 1975. From the majority black African viewpoint, South

Africa's intervention justified the significant increase in the Soviet Union's military assistance to the MPLA, starting in late October, and Cuba's introduction of combatants in early November.

As I have tried to explain based on the limited evidence that we have on the Washington-Pretoria relationship during the Angolan conflict, the two first cooperated in their efforts to defeat the MPLA by providing assistance to both the FNLA and UNITA. Later, as independence approached and with the MPLA still holding Luanda, I concluded that the United States most likely pressed for the South African invasion. Given Pretoria's significant stakes in the outcome of the war, South Africa probably would have invaded with or without American encouragement. However, the American urging and "green light" sealed the deal. Contrary to what a pericentric perspective would tell us, then, South Africa did not pull the United States into either the building crisis in Angola or the ensuing civil war.

Explaining American Intervention in Angola: Traditionalism or Revisionism

As I discussed in the introduction to this study, a contentious debate over the nature of American foreign policy during the Cold War has basically divided the diplomatic history community into two major, opposing viewpoints. One, the Traditionalist, still argues that an expansionist Soviet Union threatened freedom and democracy and that Moscow's policies and actions were largely responsible for the onset of the Cold War and its

extension to the periphery. Conversely, the newer school of thought, the Revisionists, contend that Soviet-American relations were much more complicated than the simplistic picture painted by the Traditionalist. They argue that aggressive American policies often provoked a Soviet response.

The efforts of the Post Revisionists, led by John Lewis Gaddis whose 1997 study, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, provides the master framework for the alleged synthesized Post-revisionist perspective, have not bridged the gulf between the assumptions and arguments of Traditionalism and Revisionism. Moreover, the historical disagreement continues despite the increasing availability of primary sources from the archives of both the Soviet Union and United States, as well as those of other nations.

The question before us is, which interpretation of the American-Soviet relationship best explains the American intervention in Angola? From my investigation of this Cold War episode, I have concluded that the Traditionalist assumptions about the generally benign and defensive nature of American foreign policy, and their arguments that American actions almost always came in response to Soviet, or Communist, provocation, are incorrect - at least in this case. It was American-supported, if not outright American-encouraged, aggression by the FNLA that destroyed the Alvor agreement and undermined Portugal's efforts to structure a peaceful path to Angolan independence.

As I have tried to show, the Ford Administration's official mythology subverted the truth about both the American and Soviet involvement. President Ford, Kissinger and others publicly condemned the Russians as the "culprit" in the Angolan conflict, thereby continuing the American Cold War pattern of blaming Moscow for most, if not all, the world's difficulties. Yet, in contrast to Washington's criticisms of the alleged Soviet misconduct, as I have shown, Moscow was slow to increase its support for the MPLA. When this did occur, in the late fall of 1974 and again in the spring of 1975, the Soviet action was measured and in response to Zairian, Chinese, and increasing American support for the FNLA. The latter started in mid-1974, months before the Soviet Union resumed its military assistance to the Popular Movement. However, in order to convince a skeptical American Congress and public that its own intervention was a justifiable response to Soviet-supported aggression, the administration needed to portray the Kremlin as the main provocateur by exaggerating and distorting the Soviet involvement.

The anti-Soviet rhetoric, however, masked the principal motivation for the American intervention. As I have argued, that was to reverse the perception, if not the reality, of declining American global power and hegemony in the aftermath of Vietnam. The White House believed this could be best accomplished by demonstrating to American friends and allies, but especially to the increasingly independent Western Europeans and the doubting Chinese, that the United States could still be counted on to fulfill its super-

power responsibilities. Angola, then, is most correctly seen as an opportunity to restore American credibility through a show of force, and not as case of the United States responding to a Communist offensive in Angola.

The Ford Administration's account of the American intervention also obscured the nature of Washington's relationship with Zaire, Zambia, and South Africa during the Angolan conflict. First, it downplayed the then unpopular (at least with the American Congress) President Mobutu's crucial role in the operation, and denied that Washington had sanctioned the illegal transfer of Zaire's American-supplied MAP equipment to the FNLA and UNITA. Secondly, Kissinger, especially, misrepresented President Kaunda's (of Zambia) role in the decision to intervene. This tactic, the *Zambian Ruse*, allowed administration officials to claim that America's African "friends" had asked for Washington's assistance. Finally, they denied any Washington-Pretoria cooperation in the anti-MPLA effort (and still do).

The Lessons of Angola: The Patterns of American Foreign Policy

Revisionist historians generally argue that American intervention in the periphery has been the rule rather than the exception as the United States sought global economic and geopolitical hegemony. If, as I have stated above, a Revisionist perspective best explains the American intervention in Angola, then that involvement cannot be viewed as an unusual or isolated case.

In fact, it was not. Intervention has been a major distinguishing characteristic of the United States' foreign policy not only since the end of World War II, but also before then. One need only recall the historical record of early 20th century American actions in Mexico, the Caribbean and Central America. There, numerous military operations allowed the United States to establish at least an informal empire designed to protect American economic interests. Major General Smedley Butler's early expose of his personal involvement in these activities attests to numerous pre-Cold War interventions in the region. "I helped make Mexico...safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefits of Wall Street...I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916." As the general noted, the record of such American behavior is a long one.⁷⁶⁴

However, with a preponderance of power in the aftermath of World War II, the United States expanded its interventionist activities to the global stage. A significant part of the

⁷⁶⁴ Smedley D. Butler, *War is a Racket* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 1935), 10. Traditionalists admit that the United States occasionally exercised its rights to a sphere of influence in the Caribbean, but they deny that American activities in the region led to even an informal American empire. As Robert Tucker explains, "Yesterday's interventions in the Caribbean were a microcosm. They expressed a traditional claim to a limited sphere of influence." Robert W. Tucker, *The Radical Left and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 87.

international hegemony project involved the American thirty-year commitment in Vietnam, first in support of French colonialism and, later, a succession of South Vietnamese regimes. The ultimately unsuccessful effort, however, largely contributed to the decline in American global hegemony and, domestically, to what Kissinger referred to as the “self-flagellation that has done so much harm to this nation’s capacity to conduct foreign policy,” and to remain “the guardian of international equilibrium.”⁷⁶⁵

If the defeat in Vietnam adversely affected America’s immediate position in the world, it also had other consequences which carried far beyond the end of that war. Angola was only the first in a series of post-Vietnam American engagements in the periphery both during and after the Cold War that Washington undertook, at least in part, to rid the country of its malaise. That line extends from Angola, to Afghanistan, to at least the first Gulf War. Thus, President George H.W. Bush, in his own “Mission Accomplished” moment, could triumphantly declare in the aftermath of that conflict, “By God, we have kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all.”⁷⁶⁶

In a recent article on American foreign policy, David Gibbs investigated how Washington has used external threats to “sell” a variety of domestic and international policies to the public. He examines the Korean War, the crisis in Afghanistan in late

⁷⁶⁵ “Implications of Angola for Future U.S. Foreign Policy,” U.S. Department of State, *The Department of State Bulletin* LXXIV, no. 1912 (February 16, 1976): 176.

⁷⁶⁶ As quoted in Walter LaFeber, “An End to Which Cold War?” in *The End of the Cold War, Its Meaning and Implications*, ed. Michael J. Hogan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 17.

1979-1980, and the United States' post 9/11 War on Terrorism. In each case, he analyzes how the American foreign policy elite played upon the public's fear of an external threat to implement policies which otherwise would not have been feasible. His major argument is that, in all three instances, the decision makers in Washington sought out pretexts of convenience, or perhaps even orchestrated a pretext in the case of the Afghan crisis, to justify an aggressive foreign policy that was often accompanied by increases in military spending.⁷⁶⁷

In most respects, the scope and impact of the Soviet Union's involvement in the Angolan war pales in comparison to its invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. However, Gibbs' investigation of the crisis in Afghanistan is of particular importance to the Angolan conflict because it reveals parallels between the two. Both Angola, first, and then Afghanistan came at the at the end of an era which witnessed an erosion of American power and prestige and challenges to American global dominance from all

⁷⁶⁷ David N. Gibbs, "Pretexts and US Foreign Policy: The War on Terrorism in Historical Perspective," *New Political Science*, 26, no. 3 (September 2004): 293-321. Gibbs also argues that new evidence suggests the Afghan invasion was actually an orchestrated pretext. According to Robert Gates, President Carter authorized covert aid to the anti-Communist Mujahiddin in July 1979, nearly six months before the Soviet invasion. "The level of aid, only several hundred thousand dollars, was small, but its political significance was substantial. American officials must have realized that the USSR would regard this aid as a serious provocation on its southern frontier. And so, the possibility must remain open that the secret US aid program contributed to Soviet paranoia at the time and influenced their later decision to invade." *Ibid.*, 313-314.

quarters, but especially the Third World. He described one major consequence of this decline as a “collective perception of ‘crisis’ in US foreign policy.”⁷⁶⁸

Further, Afghanistan, like Angola, was of little importance to American security interests. As Gibbs observes, “to be sure, the crisis concerned a country – Afghanistan – that officials had long insisted was of very limited importance to US security, and it remained of limited importance. This point received scant attention at the time.”⁷⁶⁹ Despite this, the Soviet invasion was portrayed as a grave threat and “a menace to US security.”⁷⁷⁰ Afghanistan’s strategic insignificance, however, was not the central issue. Rather, the Soviet invasion in late 1979 became the pretext to garner support for rearmament from a skeptical Congress and public.

Coincidentally, from at least the White House’s perspective, Angola’s importance lay not in its location or natural wealth but rather in the opportunity it presented to restore American credibility, especially with the Western European allies and the Chinese. However, the Ford Administration sought to justify its covert involvement in Angola to the Congress and American public by pointing to the provocative actions of the Soviet Union and emphasizing the grave threats to American security interests if Soviet-

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., 310.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid., 313. See also pages 307-308 for an in-depth discussion of Afghanistan’s insignificance from a Western security standpoint.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., 307.

supported aggression went unchallenged. The alleged Soviet offensive, then, became the pretext for American intervention.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979 proved a bonanza for a variety of domestic and foreign policy interests. As Gibbs tells us, while publicly “nearly everyone expressed apprehension regarding the implications of a Soviet occupied Afghanistan...such expressions of concern were mixed with a measure of satisfaction that the invasion offered ‘opportunities,’ to forge a shift in policy.” Moreover, as Zbigniew Brzezinski has noted, it also gave President Carter a chance to show his toughness toward the Russians, thereby deflecting the increasing domestic criticism from the right, especially the Committee on the Present Danger.⁷⁷¹

Although I have not addressed in detail the benefits of an Angolan “victory” for President Ford’s domestic credibility, we know from his own account the of the Mayaguez crisis that he believed his decisiveness had rescued not only the crew and the ship, but also the country’s declining confidence and his own popularity. He tells us, “As Kentucky Representative Carroll Hubbard, Jr., chairman of the House Democratic freshman caucus said, ‘It’s good to win one for a change.’ All of a sudden, the gloomy national mood began to fade. Many people’s faith in their country was restored and my

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.

standing in the polls shot up 11 points.”⁷⁷² However, as I have discussed, getting tough with Cambodia was not quite the same thing as getting tough with the Soviet Union. Moscow’s historical support for the MPLA conveniently, from Washington’s perspective, set up the Russians as a much more credible and menacing opponent.

Also, the White House viewed both Angola and Afghanistan as timely opportunities. In Afghanistan, that translated importantly into the justification for increasing defense spending and implementing the Rapid Deployment Force for the Persian Gulf. As Gibbs tells us, however, the opportunity was more expansive than just increased military spending. Like Angola, the Afghanistan crisis presented the chance to restore American credibility, as an article in *Air Force Magazine* noted. “‘The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan can provide a catalyst for putting U.S. foreign and defense policy on the road to renewed credibility. The Russian seizure in Afghanistan was a tragedy for the Afghans...and a blow to U.S. strategic interests. Nevertheless adversity can be turned into opportunity and opportunity into advantage...The Soviets, once again, may have inadvertently saved us from ourselves.’”⁷⁷³

Moreover, Vietnam was very much on the White House’s collective mind during the decision-making process on both Angola and Afghanistan. As I have argued, President

⁷⁷² Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 284.

⁷⁷³ Gibbs, “Pretexts and US Foreign Policy,” 313. The direct quotation is from John L. Frisbee, “Afghanistan, A Watershed,” *Air Force Magazine*, February 1980.

Ford and especially Henry Kissinger saw American intervention in Angola as a chance to restore America's weakened credibility in the aftermath of the U.S. defeat. In the Afghanistan crisis, after President Carter authorized covert assistance to the anti-Communist Mujahiddin in July 1979 (see note 767 on page 553), Brzezinski predicted that the assistance would induce a Soviet intervention. "That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap...The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter, essentially: 'We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War.'"⁷⁷⁴

In summary, the Vietnam War – in all its complexities - has served as a benchmark for American foreign policy since at least the early 1970s. This appears to be as true for Angola in 1975 as it was for Afghanistan four years later, and most recently in the post-Cold War era, for the first Gulf War. This should come as no surprise since the elite decision makers in Washington saw the disastrous results of the long American involvement as severely undermining American global power and hegemony. Whether or not the United States "kicked the Vietnam syndrome" during the first Gulf War, as claimed by Bush 41, remains to be seen as we are now engaged in another conflict in Iraq for reasons that are yet to be uncovered. We do know, if we care to admit it, that the

⁷⁷⁴ David N. Gibbs, *Review Essay: Looking Back at Afghanistan*, "Les Revelations d'un Ancien Conseiller de Carter: 'Oui, la CIA est Entrée en Afghanistan avant les Russes...'" 241, 242. The article is from the French weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur*, January 15-21, 1998, trans. William Blum and David Gibbs.

White House's justification for that invasion was based on fear-mongering, manufactured or distorted intelligence, and outright lies. This continues Washington's established Cold War pattern of justifying American intervention in the periphery through a misrepresentation of the truth, including an exaggeration of the threat whether posed by the Soviet Union or Saddam Hussein.

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